

The Converted

by RedDrako7

Category: Halo

Genre: Adventure, Sci-Fi

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2014-07-02 07:37:41

Updated: 2015-04-04 10:17:51

Packaged: 2016-04-27 05:08:01

Rating: M

Chapters: 7

Words: 25,859

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: 800 children are kidnapped by the Covenant to become mutated into half-humans, half Covenant species to fight the Spartans. This story follows a group of Elite Converted trying to survive and perhaps discover their identities along the way. I'm sorry I suck at descriptions but if your more of a Sangheili (Elite) fan then Spartan, read this story. :) Rated M for gore.

1. Chapter 1

I'm BAAACK! Yay! Sorry if your an original subscriber and you'd like an explanation, please look at my profile, if not I hope you like it.

* * *

><p>Dr. Halsey strode down the hall of the aircraft, to the Conference Room, finding the irony of the upcoming interview amusing. After all, who would have thought that the Covenant would have dredged up something like THIS? Just to combat her Spartans. A self-mocking smile flashed across her face as the old guilt and protectiveness resurfaced, but only briefly. She quickly pushed the feelings aside as she arrived at her destination.

_She kept her face blank as she entered. Eight heads turned to greet her. The most noticeable and the one standing closest to her was the Arbiter, leader of the Elites who were allied with the humans. Approximately seven feet and ten inches tall standing, he easily dwarfed the other two humans in the room. In addition to his reptilian yellow eyes and the elegant silver armor, he cut an impressive figure. _

_Next was Captain Serin Osman. Her brown eyes barely contained the ill feelings that she and Dr. Halsey shared toward one-another, a faint look of disgust crinkling the corners of her eyes and nose. Recently promoted, the O.N.I. agent was a sly and very influential person, who was suspected to oppose the human-elite alliance. Her

stark white features and tightly pulled back hair gave her an appropriate, if unflattering, no-nonsense look._

Sitting next to the Captain was Lieutenant Markus Thorson, a guard of the classified ship that they were on. He was young for a Lieutenant, and at first glance seemed a little naive. But Dr. Halsey wasn't really interested in him. She was here for the remaining four room members.

The four were not noticed at first, as they had been mostly hidden behind the Arbiter's bulk. They were all in the black armor that marked the Special-Ops Sangheili warriors in the former Covenant army. There were, however, some distinct non-Elite features.

_One of the first things that stood out, almost instantly, was the hair. No previously seen Sangheili ever had hair. The one standing next to the Arbiter, black armor trimmed with commander gold, had blonde over-the-shoulder loose ponytails, one over either shoulder, bound with thick gold metal bands. The second Spec-Ops over with the red-trimmed armor had a hint of deep red hair peeking out from the mostly concealing helmet. The last in the line, who also red trimmed armor had long, black, stringy hair, brushing the top of the warriors' shoulders. _

_The next thing was the eyes. Two of them had the regular reptilian eyes, but the other's had at least one or both pupils rounded, not the normal slit-pupils. The blonde grabbed Halsey's attention as it gave sharp jerk of its head in disgust of the presence of a third human. The black helmet obscured most of the Elites reptilian features, but not its eyes. The right eye was golden, slitted affair that seemed to burn with an inner fire. The left was a blue eye, with a dilated, rounded pupil. A human pupil. _

_ "Dr. Halsey. I didn't realize that you had been, invited, to this little interview." Halsey's attention was brought back by the thinly veiled anger in the Captains voice. "Of course I was Osman. Who else is smart enough not to butcher this? Besides, I've heard this had to do with my Spartans, and considering my involvement in that project, I believe I have every right to be here." _

_The venomous silence that fell between the women became almost tangible when the captain finally broke the tension. "If we could please get on with whatever this is? I think we could all appreciate it, as we all have things we need to get back to." The Lieutenant said gently. "Of course." _

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_ 'This is the most uncomfortable thing that's happened since before the death of the Minister of Penance.' _

Hans's eyes followed 's progress to the empty chair next to the human Shipmaster. The following silent stares from the humans made her irritated. She allowed herself to shift weight from one foot to the other, the only show of her restlessness. Finally the human Admiral spoke first.

_ "Thank you for allowing us to talk to your soldiers Arbiter." "It is not I you should address Captain. I'm only here to observe." "You plan to stay then?" "Yes Captain." _

Han could tell that this Captain Osman did not like the Arbiters presence, but obviously didn't dare argue his decision. After all, it was at the requested favor, or silent threat, of the humans that they could talk to herself and her team. She'd not dare request him to leave.

_ "Very well, if we may begin- " "Which of you do we address first?" abruptly cut in, to the annoyance of the Captain. Han couldn't believe that a mere Doctor dare interrupt such a powerful figure. Then again, they were just mere humans. Han stepped forward.

_ "That would be I. I am Commander Han 'Vadamai' "A female?!" The lieutenant yelped in shock. Captain Osman raised an eyebrow, Dr. Halsey showed no reaction. Han felt the familiar twinge of temper at the reaction to her gender. Whether human or Sangheili, it was the same wherever she went, to her eternal annoyance. Dr. Halsey was quick to make up for the Captains slip. "I apologize, Commander Vadamai. Yours is a rare circumstance to us, in more ways than one." _

_ Han gave a Sangheili grin, which consisted of a slight arching of the neck and crinkling around the eyes. This Doctor knew more then she was letting on to her superior, who, judging from the earlier reactions, was a political opponent of this Dr. Halsey. Han knew then that she had to be careful of that one. _

_ "Indeed Doctor. What is it that you would ask of me and my team?" "We would just like to know if the stories are true." "What stories?" The Captain scowled. Han had no intention of fully cooperating with these humans. The process of their Conversion was still held somewhat sacred to her and the team. More importantly thought was that the Conversion would never be repeated. Han highly doubted that such a high ranking official wanted to just talk to them. replied bluntly,

_ "The stories that you, and your team, have been infused with human DNA." "That would be wrong Doctor." Han removed her helmet. A gold mane tumbled down to reveal a face, framed by two over-the-shoulder ponytails, that was basically Sangheili, but with some notably human features. These were eyes that where slightly more round than an Elite's, with one gold-slitted and the other blue with a round pupil. A strange triangular shape that was reminiscent of a human nose was also there, and though she still had the quadruple mandibles, they were less distinctive, blending into the face more evenly. _

The most noticeable thing was that this unique blend of human and reptilian features allowed for more of an expressional face then the original Elites, enabling the present company to see the angry bitterness in the human-reptilian eyes.

_ "We were humans, Converted into the beings you see before you." "What?!" "How did this happen?!" "It's not possible!" Dr. Halsey remained silent through the Captains and lieutenants outburst, staring at the female warrior with a hungry look in her eyes that made Han feel just that much more irritated. "How did this happen Commander," Halsey asked firmly, quieting the other two, but not without another scowl from Captain Osman. Han suppressed another grin. Dr. Halsey appeared to be a good opponent. This would be

interesting._

_ "It's a long story Doctor. Surely would not wish to hear the whole thing." "On the contrary, I would like to know everything. Where were you born, where were you taken from, how were you taken without notice, how old were you when you were, as you said, Converted? What was your training like, everything." "It will take some time to recall everything." "Time is not an issue to me, and we have that as we journey to Sanghelios."_

For once, it seemed that Halsey and Osman agreed on something as the Captain nodded her head in silent, though grudging, agreement."As you wish. I will begin at the start of our tale."

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Marian ran through the tall weeds to the woods behind her family's house, where her friends were waiting for her with her little brother, Dillan, pushing himself to keep up. It was late in the afternoon, which was the best time to play capture-the-flags-tag. As one of the two ten year old kids in their group, they needed her to help make sure the rules where followed, unless it would be more convenient for her to break them.

"Mare!" Ian called out, grinning at her approach, stood next to their Meeting Tree. Ian was the other ten year old in their group, standing a little taller than she, with a mop of chocolate-brown hair and mischievous pale brown eyes. He also happened to be her closest friend.

The other friends where there as well. Sierra, who was the shortest, with her deep red hair that Marian always wished she had, and sparkling hazel eyes that gave her an innocent look, making her able to fool any adult who didn't know her. Markus, the tallest, had thin, long black hair, and pale narrow face that made him look almost like a girl, except for his half-closed emerald eyes and slight scowl that was always there. He never said much or at least anything good, and was so good at blending in, that he was always picked first in capture-the-flags-tag team version.

And then lastly there was Dillan. He was the most distinctive of the group, though not in a good way. Almost the same size as Sierra, he had dirty-blonde hair in a bowl cut. He was also rather chunky, coupled with a chubby, freckled baby-face that always looked ready to cry, making him a target for bullies and trouble.

"Did you have to bring your little brother along Mare?" whined Markus. "I didn't have a choice, it was the only way my parents would let me out of the house." "Just leave it Mark. You got the flags Ian?"

"Sure thing Mare, don't sweat it. Are we doing teams this time, or individual?" "We did teams last time," said Markus dully. "Individual," piped Sierra excitedly."Let's do teams. I'm no good by myself. I'll be the first to lose my flag," whined Dillan fretfully. He always struggled with outdoorsy games.

"That's because you're a porker, Dill-pickle," sneered Markus."Hey, be nice Mark. I don't see you beating his math scores." "Shut it Ian!" "Make me grease stain!" "Alright knock-it off! Let's just play

ok? Dillan, if you get out first it's ok. That just means it'll be over quicker," soothed Marian. Dillan nodded his face a pout. The group quickly tied on their different colored rag "flags". After Marian helped Dillan tie his around his wrist, they huddled together.

"Whose turn is it to be the starter," asked Sierra. "It's Ian's turn. I did it last," Marian replied. "Alright." Ian went to their tree and, covering his eyes as he faced it, started to count down."Twenty, nineteen, eighteenâ€œ! "The children scattered like cockroaches when a light is turned on. Marian grinned as she ran, sure that she would win this time. Ian and the rest would never think to look up in a tree. She already had a tree picked out and everything.

Marian could only barely hear Ian's voice as she reached her chosen tree, a tall pine with her stick leaning against the trunk. She'd need that to hit anyone who might try to climb up after her. She quickly stuck the stick in her mouth, ignoring the gross taste, and climbed up the tree as high as she dared. She leaned over until she could see through the branches to the ground below and waited.

Some time passed and Marian suddenly felt anxious. The forest was quiet. Unnaturally quiet. Where were her friends? Normally there would have been something by now. There was suddenly a huge crashing noise that startled Marian so bad that she almost fell out of the tree. Something big was moving -through the forest. Then she heard a shout. It sounded like Ian.

She quickly grabbed her stick in one hand and looked through the branches. Ian was running when he tripped on a tree root and landed face first under her tree. Then a huge creature came to stand over him as he tried to get to his feet. Marian was horrified. She had seen a picture of this creature, which she would later learn was a Sangheili, on TV. Her parents had told her they weren't real! Though, in the split second that she thought of it, she remembered her parents worried glances at one another afterwards.

She noticed the tall alien lean further over Ian and reach down toward him. She scooted further forward to see what was happening. Too far. Suddenly the rather thin branches broke under her, sending her tumbling down to the scene below, stick still in hand. Marian shut her eyes and as she fell. On the way down she was stopped briefly with a sickening 'squish' sound as her stick caught on something and snapped. A terrifying roar of pain and fury ensued as she landed roughly on the ground, knocking the air out of her. She staggered to her feet and opened her eyes, instantly regretting it. In front of her stood the gigantic alien, looking vicious as the fading orange light of the setting sun reflected off his strange black armor, and skull-like helmet.

Marian was frozen in place as the alien glared down at her hatefully. She was barely aware of having to almost lean backwards just to look into the creatures golden eyes- Marian's eyes widened. No, not eyes, eye! One of its eyes was oozing purple blood and clear gel, that was actually some of its eye. In her dazed state she noticed a stub of branch sticking out from what you could see of its eye socket. A small scratch was barely visible going across its eyelid, to a part of its cheek. Terror ripped through her chest. She had blinded it! Not intentionally or completely but that didn't seem to matter to the furious Elite.

She clutched the remains of the stick that had harmed the thing and started to back up, bumping into a stunned Ian. She didn't even notice the still warm alien blood crawl over her small hands. The tall Sangheili stepped forward with deliberate slowness, toying with the two children. It made Marian think of a cat stalking a mouse. Her fear finally made her limbs unfreeze. "Run Ian!"*

Ian turned and started to run through the woods. Marian made a split second decision and darted between the monstrous creatures legs, barely dodging its grasp. She ran as fast as her little legs could carry her, when something weird happened. She ran into . . . nothing. She ran into it so hard that she flew backwards, losing her breath for the second time that day and gaining a headache in the process. She glanced toward her feet where her stick lay nearby. Just in time to see the black-encased foot of another of the frightening aliens appeared out of thin air. It had been invisible.

Still out of breath, she could barely roll onto her side in a feeble attempt to avoid this new alien. It did no good. The Elite took two easy strides and grabbed the little human girl by the throat, bringing her up to its eye level. She glared at the alien defiantly and proceeded to struggle to break the strong alien's four-fingered grasp from her neck, but it did no good except to get the hand to tighten even more. Marian was in the process of biting the restraining hand, to the amusement of the said hands' owner, when the heavy footsteps of more Elites made her stop and look up.

Three of the warrior aliens entered from the direction she'd just come from, another four coming from all other directions. Marian noticed that were the aliens armor who held her was a sleek, solid black, the others had a purple tinge. It then occurred to Marian that this particular one might be of a higher rank than these others. It was not a reassuring thought.

She also noticed that one new arrival was glaring at her. It was the one she had accidentally hurt, which continued his glaring as he approached, his purple blood drying and flaking morbidly on his face. Next to the now one-eyed one, another Elite was carrying something. Marian stared forlornly as she came to recognize the giant creature had Ian by the throat, bringing him along as if he was as light as a feather. She struggled to make eye-contact with her friend as the Sangheili walked past her, but to no avail as Ian was occupied with trying to slip his captors grasp.

Marian then felt her own captor start to lower her. She proceeded to try to pick up where she'd left off in trying to get away, only to be shaken until her headache made her stop struggling. As Marian gasped for air, she watched the one she had stabbed stand in front of her captor. She started in surprise as they began to speak in their guttural, fearsome-sounding language.

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"Commander Vahn 'Thalanee, there are no more of the human young-lings in the area." "Good. We need to leave now. His Holiness has informed me that a Fleet is ready to begin the purging of this planet." "Praise the Prophets! I wish I could watch or partake in our great victory!" "We each have our duty to help pave the path of the Great Journey, no matter the capacity we are required to fill." "Of course

Commander."

"What was the cause of your injury Arn 'Tolarmee? Were there any of the adults about?" "No Commander. It was caused by the filth you hold," Arn snarled, glaring down at the little female in Vahns grasp."She did? Ha, she's a defiant one."

Vahn looked at her curiously. The girls eyes widened at the sudden attention, then glared angrily back at both of the Elites."She's a disgusting human, who has dishonored me!" "That is all the more reason to keep her. She is strong, and that is what the Minister wished for when it came to the human children under our jurisdiction. As such, you are not allowed to touch her." "We already have enough. What is one more? I must regain my honor." "You will not regain it from her. Live with your dishonor until you fight again."

"Commander—" "Would you argue with me," Commander Vahn asked quietly, danger evident in his voice."No Commander." Arn replied through clenched teeth."Tell all remaining squad members on ground to return to the Phantom. We have what we came for." "Yes Commander."

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Marian's head rang as she tried to sit up straight on the metal floor of the airship she'd been thrown into. She slowly leaned her head against the metal siding and groaned, closing her eyes against the pain."Marian? Is that you?" "Ow... Ian?" "Oh my gosh your alive!" "Sierra? Is Markus or Dillan here?" "Me and Bawl-Baby are here, Mare." "Don't call him that!"

Marian's eyes snapped open. They were huddled into the back of a fair sized spacecraft, with a huge amount of Elites in front of them. It was almost overwhelming. She turned back to her small group of friends, and found her little brother. He was curled up behind the rest, biting his fist to muffle his sobs. She scooted over to him, not wanting to risk standing up. She gently placed his head in her lap and stroked his hair soothingly.

"Hey, it's going to be ok. Don't be afraid. I bet our parents will send someone out to find us." "You think so?" Dillan sniffled."Sure, why not?" "What if they don't?" "Then we'll take care of you, won't we guys?" "Of course we will, we're friends," said Ian in a voice that did not match his bleak was a pause in the conversation as the ship took off. The children clung to one another nervously until the ship leveled out.

"What do you think they want with us," Sierra asked quietly. They eyed the Elites cautiously, but the aliens ignored them completely."Do you think that they're going to eat us?" squeaked Dillan fearfully."Don't be stupid Dillan, if that was the case they wouldn't have just gotten us," Markus snapped."Then what WILL they do?"

"We don't know Dillan. We'll just have to wait and see," replied Ian grimly.

"Agony! These wretches smell worse than Unggoy!" "Indeed! Why the Legate was allowed to do this is—"

Marian felt her face grow hot. Though she could not understand exactly what they were saying, Marian had the sneaking suspicion that the aliens where talking about them. And not in the complementary sort of way.

The human children were walking down large metal corridors; having just barely arrived at the large spaceship, they would later learn was called the Penance. They were being escorted by two Elites, who seemed to be disgruntled about having to bring their small band to wherever they were going. As they walked, Marian was looking around when she felt a shove from behind, almost making her stumble into one of the Elites.

"Watch it Dill-pickle!" Markus, who had been bumped into by Dillan, had in turn bumped into Marian. "Sorry, I tripped!""I don't care! Land on your fat (*%^ next time instead of me," snarled Markus, shoving Dillan onto the floor."Hey! Don't treat him like that!""Don't tell me what to do, Mare!""Guys—"

"Enough!"

The children froze as one of the irritated Sangheili towered over them. It had spoken in English! Its deep base voice resonated in a guttural tone as it continued to speak."Close your jaws, or I shall bind them shut!"They then continued to walk as if nothing happened, urging the kids forward. The children tried their best to stay quiet and not to breathe too loudly, afraid that they'd push the tall creature too far. Then Ian piped up, "Where did you learn English?"

The Elites ignored him, as they turned a corner in quick easy strides, making the children jog to keep up with them. Marian tensed as Ian, emboldened by the silence, continued to pester their escorts, making the other kids grow ever more nervous with each passing question. The strange group suddenly stopped in front of a round, retractable door that took up most of the wall it was set in. On either side stood two Elites in elaborate orange and red armor of the Honor Guard. They paused as the Elites started to talk to one-another.

Marian took this time to grab Ian and whisper—"Will you shut-up?! You're going to get us into trouble!"Ian was about to reply when a hissing noise erupted from the door as it slid smoothly into the wall. The two escorting Elites shoved the children through the doorway, into a wide, plain room, except for the great window in front of them which showed an awe-inspiring view of the stars. However, the room was not unoccupied. Two lines of the Honor Guard made a pathway to a one step platform. Over that platform sitting in a hover chair was a different alien then what Marian or the others had yet to see.

It had pale, wrinkly pink flesh, with a head that seemed almost too big for its slim neck to support. Its face had no noticeable nose, with half-lidded eyes that protruded from the sides of the skull, framed by tiny, floppy dog-like ears. It had a stub of beard under its thin, lipless mouth. It wore red robes, adorned with a thick, golden, ostentatious collar which flared elaborately from its small shoulders to rise past its head. The collar looked so heavy; in fact, that it seemed like the odd creature was permanently hunched over from its weight.

The Minister of Penance gestured with its small, almost delicate, hand for the group to come forward. There was another shove from behind and the children walked slowly forward, intimidated by the powerful forms that flanked either side. They stopped at the bottom step of the platform and then were shoved roughly to their elbows and knees by their escort. Marian peeked up. The new alien floated in front of her not even glancing down. Beside him stood two more guards and, surprise, the Sangheili who had grabbed her.

"These are the last of the ones that we have taken, Legate."

"As I can see Commander," the Minister replied

The Prophets gaze glided slowly over the kneeling children. Then he turned his head sharply to the Commander."Why are there two females Commander? I believed that you where looking for more to be put with the Sangheili." "I was Minister. They both showed great potential for strength and honor, as well as humans can anyway." "Hmm, if you say so Commander," the Prophet replied skeptically. Then added with a more casual air, "it is of no consequence. If they are not worthy of the gifts we offer, they will not survive." "It is as you say Minister." "Bring these and the rest of the whelps to the Gathering Hall. It is time to put them on the path to their Conversion."

Marian and her friends were herded into a huge metal room. It had a high vaulted ceiling that almost could not be seen by those on the ground. A balcony wrapped around the room as well, far above the people below. It was lit by strips of florescent light that gave the room an eerie look. They didn't have to wait long before other children were led in to join them with little to no noise. As the press of bodies started to separate the confused band, Marian quickly grabbed the two closest to her, Dillan and Ian.

Elites walked through the mass of huddled children, discouraging any kind of talk just by their presence. As Marian quickly pulled her brother out of the way of one of the patrolling Sangheili, Ian elbowed her and pointed toward the balcony. The Prophet bobbed at the edge of the balcony, two Honor Guards flanking him. The others started to notice him as well. When the Prophet knew he had their attention, he started to speak in English.

"Welcome, you who will redeem your race from its fallen state. You were chosen from the rest of your heretical people to serve us and, if found worthy, to join us on the Great Journey."

Marian had no idea what the floating pink creature meant. What 'Journey'? Didn't they just take one? Why in the world would she want to come with these guys anyway? The Prophet continued to preach to the children, who barely understood half of what they were being told. Only that they were 'lucky' and 'blessed' to be here, though for what reason they weren't sure.

After what seemed like an eternity to the young kids, the Prophet finally brought his speech to a close with an announcement."It will now be determined if you are worthy to join the Covenant and, if so, where you shall be placed. You may start Commander," he finished in Sangheili."As you command Legate," replied Commander Vahn 'Thalane replied, bowing with his fist over one of his two hearts. Chaos

ensued. The Minister of Penance left the Gathering Hall as the sounds of startled and frightened children rang out from beneath him.

Marian clung to her two friends, desperately looking for the others in the turmoil. Elites roared at, grabbed, and shoved children this way and that in what seemed a random scattering with no pattern to it at all, none that the children could see at least. A scream ripped through the room that froze the crowd for a split second. One of the Elites had impaled a boy on its pale-blue plasma sword, the smell of burnt flesh permeating the air.

The Sangheili quickly took advantage of the pause and finished organizing the children. Fifteen lines replaced the confusion, stunned silence filling the bleak room. The Elite who had killed the boy tossed what remained of his body into a wall with a casual flick of his sword. Those closest to the discarded body jumped at the sudden crashing sound. Marian, who was not too far away from the incident, heard someone gasp, and another whimper. The Elites who'd been patrolling between the lines pounced, dragging the two offenders before their leader, the Commander.

Marian strained to see over the line of heads in front of her. Where the two who were taken Sierra or Markus? What was happening? She saw the black-armored Sangheili gesture and heard his deep voice echo across the dead silent room like thunder. The two boys were separated into two different areas against the wall in front of the rest of the children. Marian sighed with relief. Neither of the two were her friends. Upon further inspection of the crowd, Marian spotted Sierra two rows and a little to the left of her. Markus was at the far right, at the very end of the line in front of her. Ian was two people away to her right. Then the Commander stepped forward to the beginning of the front line.

He paused for only a second, and declared something Marian didn't understand. The boy was sent to stand with one of the two previously sorted boys. The tall Elite barely paused at the second child in line, stating one word as he passed. This boy was sent to the left corner of the wall, separated from the other three. Commander 'Thalanee continued down the line, repeating the same three guttural words until he came to a sudden of the older looking boys, a twelve year-old, Marian would have guessed, had tried to punch the reptilian Sangheili. He was easily stopped. The Commander said a word that Marian hadn't heard before now. "Sangheili," the Commander stated.

The boy was forced to the far right of the other boys, creating four groups. Marian started to pay better attention as the Elite continued down the rows. "Unggoy, Kig-Yar, Unggoy, Lekgolo, Unggoy, Unggoy, Kig-Yar, Kig-Yar, Sangheili—" This sorting continued for awhile, some to one group, some to another. Few went to the 'Lekgolo' group. Even fewer went to the Sangheili. As the Commander got closer, Marian got ever more nervous. She felt Dillan trembling to the left of her. She grabbed his hand and squeezed it reassuringly. She whispered, "Don't be afraid, Dillan. It'll be alright. Don't show them you're scared." Marian didn't know why she said that. Don't show your fear. She didn't understand what was happening, but something told her no good would come of letting these aliens see that they were frightened of them.

She watched quietly as Commander Vahn sorted Sierra into the Kig-Yar group, her heart pounding in her ears. He and two Elites following him were now just at the row in front of her. A sudden smell made her nose wrinkle. The boy in front of her had wet his children around him scooted away as far as they could. Even Marian and some of the others in her line dared to back up a little. One of the Elites stepped past the Commander, a sizzling sound followed as he activated his energy sword. Quicker than any of the kids could follow, the Elite sliced the unfortunate boy clean in half length-ways. Two even halves fell to the floor. Little to no blood came out, the insides perfectly cauterized. The other subordinate Elite kicked the remains away from the lines and forced the children back into place; though they all tried to discreetly avoid the spot where the boy had stood.

Marian felt numb from shock. The boy had stood right in front of her, the sword just inches from her as it had passed through the kid in a flash of blue. She snapped out of it as the Commander finished with the line that had been in front of her, Markus having been sorted into the Sangheili group. She felt her heart pick up its pace, her breath coming in short, quick bursts. Dillan squeezed her hand tight, cutting off the circulation. Dillan. . . Marian started. What would they do to Dillan?! She trembled as the small entourage of Sangheili came ever closer. Flashbacks of what had happened to the other two boys sped across her mind. She couldn't let that happen again. Not to her little brother. Grim resolve calmed her breathing and stopped her trembling but did nothing to calm her rapid heartbeat.

After what felt like hours, the Elites reached Dillan. Marian quickly darted out in front of him, arms spread out to shield him from the Commander. The Sangheili who had cut down the boy in front of her snarled and went to grab her. Vahn raised a hand, stopping the Elite in his tracks. Marian quickly spoke before anything else happened.

"Please! Wherever you put me, put my brother there too!" She stared steadily into the Commanders orange eyes, trying not to blink. One of the subordinate Elites growled something at the Commander. He ignored it, raising his hand for silence. "You do not know what you ask for child," Commander Vahn 'Thalanee stated in English as he towered over the young girl. "Yes I do. Let him stay with me, please."

The Commander stared at her for awhile longer than started to move on, stating the two children's fates as he continued down the line, "Put the two of them in with the Sangheili. Know this, female--he turned to look back at her wide-eyed gaze and held it." -whatever happens to that boy is because of your choice this day."

The Commander continued on as if nothing had happened to interrupt his progress. Marian and Dillan were led to the small group of children who were marked as Sangheili, Ian joining them soon after. The sorting continued for awhile longer, with no more major incidents. Then the respective groups were led through different doors. As the Sangheili group was pushed forward, Marian glanced back at Sierra, who gave her a nervous grin as she disappeared in the crowd of her new group.

Once again, Marian and her remaining friends were herded through the corridors of the airship. They were brought to a new room, this one a little more familiar to the worn out kids, a shower room of sorts. Well, at least they wouldn't have to go around dirty anymore. Taking

the initiative, Ian started to strip as he headed to one of the shower cubicles. The four Elites who had guided this new group turned and left, leaving the children to fend for themselves for awhile. Marian blushed as the other boys around her started to strip as well, feeling a little more relaxed now that their escorts weren't in the room.

Leaving Dillan with Ian, she walked down the long row of cubicles with her head ducked, hearing laughter and shouts as the boys playfully fought for showers. As she reached the end, she saw another girl, the only other girl, dart quickly into the last shower. Marian hurried over to the same shower and stood around the corner, tapping the wall with her knuckles.

"Si?" "Uh, hi, my name is Marian," Marian introduced herself, feeling a little awkward. "I'm Iliana. Why are you way over here," Iliana asked, her sweet Latino accent echoing in her cubicle. "I don't want to shower around the other boys." Iliana laughed. "You can use mine when I'm done." "Thanks Iliana."

The two girls continued to chatter as they each took turns showering, both trying not to think of what might happen next. When Marian finished, Iliana was standing at the entrance, dressed in a black body suit with pale blue trimming, bringing out her olive skin tone. She tossed a similar one to Marian. "Where did you get these," Marian asked as she got dressed. "The aliens dropped them off by the door. I grabbed a couple while you were showering."

"While you were naked?!" Iliana shrugged, "it doesn't matter to me. I'm use to being around my brothers." "You have brothers?" "Five, how about you?" "One and he is here with me." "Wow, I don't know if that's lucky or not. I don't think I'd want my brothers here."

Before Marian could reply, two of the four Elite escorts entered the room. Talk died almost instantly as the children eyed the Sangheili cautiously. "Line up," the Elite on the left barked. The kids scrambled to obey, not wanting to taste the end of a sizzling blue sword. They quickly formed one line, Marian and Iliana at the back, two more Elites taking up the rear. Then they were on their way once more. Marian felt exhaustion gnawing at her, making her stumble over her own feet and almost tripped up the line. The others were also showing signs of fatigue, staggering, yawning, and drooping.

They finally arrived to the last room they would see that night, a set of barracks. Waiting for them was an eight-foot tall red armored Elite. The boy in the front stopped dead in his tracks for a split second, until one of the Sangheili escorts shoved him forward, making the rest of the line follow. Everyone was awake now as they crowded into the barracks, giving this new Sangheili a wide birth. When everyone was in, the four escorts gathered behind the red-armored Elite, the automatic doors closing behind the two coming from the hallway.

"I am Major Tars 'Sughar and you will address me as such. You hundred were chosen out of the other seven hundred to be honored as a Sangheili. The Prophets, the Speakers for the Gods, have declared that you are to learn of our ways, to be raised as we raise our own and learn of the Great Journey. That does not mean I have to enjoy hauling you around." His meaning was quite clear. There would be no love lost between Major 'Sughar and his charges and absolutely no

compulsion of mercy.

"Tomorrow you will begin your reformation and preparation for your Conversion. Be prepared and keep silent. Your insolent human ways will not be tolerated here." Then he and the other four Elites left, the children making way for them quickly. Stunned silence filled the room for a little while until the group started to pick out beds. Marian grabbed Iliana and started searching for her three other friends. She soon found them near the front. The beds in the back and middle were already taken. No one wanted to be near the entrance where the Sangheili were sure to come through tomorrow.

Dillan was near hysterics, sobbing into a pillow as he sat on his bed. Markus sneered derisively from a bed across from him. Ian looked exhausted, his eyes devoid of his normal cheerfulness, his shoulders drooping as he sat on the bed right of Dillan's. He smiled faintly as Marian and Iliana approached. "Figures you would find the only other girl in a hundred Mares," Ian joked halfheartedly. "Hola, I'm Iliana Cassandra Delavira Dominguez but you can call me Iliana or Ana." "Hey, I'm Ian, that's Markus, and that's Dillan." "How do you know each other amigo?" "We were all caught at the same time." "Ah, lucky you eh," Iliana said sarcastically.

"Hey Ian," Marian interrupted. "How's he holding up," she asked, nodding her head toward Dillan. "Well, he's managed not to get himself killed yet. I bet he won't last a week," Markus said casually, leaning back onto his pillow with his hands behind his head.

"Shut-up Markus," Marian snapped, glaring angrily at him. Markus ignored her, continuing as if she hadn't said anything. "And Mare, I'm not taking care of him. You heard the big guy; Dillan's your issue now." "What do you mean by that?" "I mean that it's the survival of the fittest now. I'm not going to die because of Pickle there."

"No one asked you to." Markus raised an eyebrow at Marian. She ignored him, and went to Dillan, pulling his head to rest in her lap. "I-I-I'm s-scared Mare! I don't wanna d-d-die," Dillan blubbered. "I want t-to g-g-go home!" "I know Dillan. I want to go home too. We defiantly can't stay here, that's for sure." "What are you thinking chica," asked Iliana slyly, sitting down on an empty bed on the other side of Dillan's. "I think we need to escape."

"Are you serious," hissed Markus angrily, sitting up as he leaned in toward the four other friends. Ian turned and stared as if Marian was insane. "Yes I am! We can't live like this. You said its survival of the fittest; I think that nobody is going to live at all! We need to get out!" Marian whispered, her voice rising with desperation. "How are we supposed to do that," asked Ian incredulously, making his voice low. "I don't know. All I know is we've been kidnapped to be raised and prepared for what? This Conversion they keep talking about? We don't even what in the world that is. One thing's for sure, I don't want to stay and find out."

"So what's the plan," Iliana asked eagerly, her eye sparkling with mischief. "Yes oh Wise One? What is the plan," Markus asked sarcastically, eyebrow cocked, his arms crossed against his chest.

Marian paused. She hadn't thought about that. How? After a short awkward period of silence, Iliana then spoke, drawing Marian out of her thoughts. "We can wait. Watch where they take us. Maybe we can find a way to sneak onto a ship that's going to a planet where we can get to our families!"

"Do you really think we can," asked Dillan hopefully as he sat up, staring wide-eyed at Iliana.

"Why not," Iliana said enthusiastically. "It's going to take a bit before we actually can Dillan," cautioned Ian. "Or never," quipped Markus. Ian shot him a glare. "I think Iliana is right Markus. We can do it." "Whatever Marian. I'm going to sleep." With that said Markus got under his covers and turned his back on them. "Cheerful guy isn't he," asked Iliana sarcastically. "Go easy on him. We had another friend with us but she was put in another group. She and Markus were best friends," said Ian sympathetically as he glanced over to where Markus lay.

"Well maybe he should be more nice to the friends he has left," Iliana stated as she tucked herself into the bed she'd been sitting on. Ian sighed and with a nod to Marian and Dillan followed the other two's example. Marian sighed and started to head to an empty bed by Markus, when Dillan snatched her hand. Marian glanced back at him. "Do you really think we can Mare? Can we really go back home?" Marian hesitated before answering.

"Yes, I know we can," Marian lied, smiling reassuringly. "Now I'm going to bed. I'm beat." She slipped out of Dillan's grasp. As she settled onto her bed, she felt a tug of guilt grip her heart. She honestly wasn't sure if they could. After all, they were just kids. And the odds were stacked against them. Marian tried to tell herself that she did the right thing. No need to scare him anymore than he already was.

* * *

><p>Ok, hope you all liked it, please leave a comment after the wort, wort, wort. :)

2. Chapter 2

"Awaken!"

Marian started, falling out of her bed. Remembering her circumstance, Marian quickly scrambled to her feet and looked around. Major 'Sughar stood in front of the entranceway, blocking the only way out. Blue armored Sangheili roved through the rows of beds, roaring in the face of some, upending beds of others. Two had been too slow for their liking and were stabbed where they lay. Seeing this, Marian quickly looked for her friends, worried they'd be next; especially her little brother.

However this time she had nothing to worry about. He was standing at the foot of his bed next to Iliana. He looked shaken, but otherwise seemed ok. Iliana had an easygoing grin on her face, as if this was an everyday occurrence, though her eyes showed her fear. Ian had a sleepy look on his face as he slouched next to his own bed. Markus was fully alert, staring cautiously out from under his thick dark

lashes.

"Line up!"

Once more the remaining children lined up, avoiding the two dead occupants as best as they could. The Major noticed this and walked over to stand next to them, forcing the children's gaze toward the dead."This is what becomes of those who aren't worthy of the Conversion!" 'Sughar gestured to the two bodies."Look well and remember your fallen comrades. Let this lesson be burned into your memories! Do not falter or let your human frailties stand in the way of glory!"

He then came to the head of the line, leading the puzzled children out of the barracks. Marian tried to focus on where they were going, counting the turns and looking for anything that might tell where things were, such as the place where they kept the aircraft. However, all she caught was a wave of hunger and confusion. Everything looked the same to her and her stomach was killing her. She hadn't eaten anything since lunch yesterday.

They arrived at a narrow room, with multiple foreign-looking weapons and practice gear lining the walls. Yet another Elite stood in the center of the room, waiting for them. The first thought that came to Marians mind was that this one looked older. He stooped lower than the other Sangheili she had seen, his hands and long neck wrinkled from age. But she also noticed how the Major and his fellows seemed to have a great respect for this older alien, the Major bowing his head as he approached. She listened as 'Sughar addressed this new Elite, wishing she understood what was being said

. "Here are the new recruits, Elder." "Very well Major, they will be ready to leave when you come to get them." "As you say Elder Emsree." Tars 'Sughar bowed to the Elder and left, taking his Elites with him. The Elder watched his new charges, scrutinizing their behaviors. Some shuffled their feet restlessly; others avoided his gaze, and a few staring right back at him, either curious or angry. "I am Elder Emsree" he addressed them simply in a firm but kind voice. "I expect you to address me as Elder or Sir. Do you understand?" "Yes sir," the children replied.

He pointed at one of the boys, Markus to be exact. "You. Pick a weapon. You, you, and you as well." Markus blinked a bit and then went to the walls, followed by three other boys. They started looking at the various mock weapons around the room. He picked a pike-like weapon, swinging it around a bit to get a feel for it. One of the others, an older boy, picked a replica energy-sword, making some of the children eye him with dislike.

"Now come at me like you are going to kill me."The boys looked at him like he was crazy."Come now. You are males; you should not be so timid. If you manage to take me down, I will dismiss you and allow you to eat early."

An eager gleam came to the boys eyes. Even when not hungry, young boys could always go for a meal, and these boys hadn't had one in awhile. The oldest looking boy charged in, his blunt sword swinging wildly. The old Elite moved to the side and stuck his leg out, tripping the boy as he stumbled by. The other boys hesitated, surprised at how quick the alien was. Emsree spoke up, a reprimand in

his tone. "Do not just stand there! You are Sangheili! Surely you can take down an old male like me!"

Anger was now added to the boys growling stomachs. One of them glanced behind the Elder, tipping him off to the fact the older boy was up. All of them suddenly dog piled on the old Elite, or tried to at least. Old though he may be, Elder Emsree was still a warrior. The bystanders watched in amazement as the old alien defeated his opponents, at four to one.

The Elder then sent them back, and repeated the exercise with a new set of kids. Everyone got a chance to try, but none defeated the old Elite, though some came closer than others. By the end, all of the children were exhausted, panting and sweating as they stood in line. Emsree showed no signs of fatigue as he paced up and down the line. "Do you understand yet where you went wrong? Step forward if you believe you do."

At first no one dared. Then Marian took a tentative step out of line. The Sangheilis head swung sharply to look at her as he came to stand before her. "Well female? Where did you and yours go wrong?"

"Um, well, is it because we didn't work together Elder," Marian asked tentatively.

"Hm, yes, what you say is true. Team work is everything when you are fighting in a group. If you are to be a Commander or even a Shipmaster, you must be able to coordinate all to work as one, otherwise it will be all for not. What are you called by," the Elder asked, stopping his slow pacing to come back to Marian. The change in topic was so sudden that it took a few seconds for Marian to answer. "Uh, Marian, Sir, or Mare," she replied nervously, thinking she might have said or done something wrong.

"You will be called by Mahr from here on. Your old name, like your old life, is dead, along with your old self. As future Sangheili, your responsibility is to become the finest and most honorable warriors of the Covenant. For now you are weak and so only given names so that your human tongue does not sully those who must speak with you anymore than it has to. When you become full warriors, you shall receive a true name that will be known by generations of warriors to come. Remember this, all of you, as you receive your new names and lives."

He continued on from there to the others, giving each a new name and a bit advice occasionally. He came to a close as the Major returned to retrieve the children once more. They followed quietly, exhausted from the workout and mental stress. They were led into a room with human food set on low tables, looking like a feast to the ravenous horde of kids. They were once again left to their own devices and almost all charged the table. Marian felt dazed as she went toward a bowl of oranges. No, not Marian, Mahr. She went to grab an orange but they were already gone. Then she quickly looked around.

Half the food was already gone, with not even half of the kids fed. It then clicked in her head.

This was a challenge. Survival of the fittest. She was going to have to fight for her food. She ran up to where a group of boys gathered around some cooked meat and started to shove and elbow her way

through. Almost instantly, the boys started to shove back, sending her stumbling away. She glared, her growling stomach underlying her annoyance. She was hungry and wanted her food now. She charged back into the fray, using every ounce of strength she had left until the bowl was within arm's reach. But she could already feel herself getting pushed back out again. She grabbed blindly at the bowl and slipped away from them before anyone could snatch back what she had managed to grab. She'd managed to get just a fistful of meat. Not a lot, but it was better than nothing.

Marian looked around for her friends and brother. She found them in a corner eating what they'd scavenged, Ian and Iliana sharing with Dillan. She smiled and moved over to them, offering some of her food for trade. They barely finished eating when they were sent on their way again. The routine for the rest of the day included them starting to learn the Sangheili language and alphabet, the illustrious history of the Covenant and the various species that were a part of it, Sangheili customs, and of the Great Journey, all with two meals squeezed somewhere in between. Marian and the other children had caught on quickly about the food, fighting each other for a good place in line and almost trampling those who weren't fast enough to get to the food.

By the end of the day Mahr was so exhausted that she didn't even bother to try looking around to plan an escape. The moment they reached the barracks, she flopped onto her bed, her muscles aching, her mind spinning with all the things that had been thrown at her this day.

The two bodies were gone from this morning. Three others had died during the course of the day; one while trying to get some food, another laughing at one of the many Sangheili beliefs of honor, the last for interrupting while learning about the Great Journey. Mahr wasn't sure what to think about the Great Journey. She'd never been religious before now. She sighed and rubbed her eyes as she sat up. Now wasn't the time to think about that. A change of clothes was waiting for her at the foot of her bed. She changed as quickly as she could then sat at the foot of Dillans bed, the others gathering around.

"So what are your guys new names," Mahr asked. Iliana grinned "Gee Mahr, you don't know? The Elder would not be pleased."Mahr blushed "Shut-up, I didn't want attention it just sort of happened that way." "Whatever. I got Jon-la. Kinda neat eh?" "If you say so, Jonah," sneered Markus "Jh-An-la, ugly." "No, mines actually Rktas, Jonah." "Would you two just shut-up," Ian snapped, exhaustion showing on his face. They stopped, shocked at Ians' outburst."Hey you ok," Mahr asked, concerned."Yeah, I'm fine. By the way, my new name is Hyrak."

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Weeks went by in a blur and soon the weeks turned into months. As the group of children got smaller, those that remained got stronger, smarter, and wiser. They learned how to work as a team, when to be silent, when to speak. They learned proficiency in weapons, politics, everything that was considered essential to being an asset to the Covenant, to become one of the Converted. Though they still didn't understand exactly what that meant.

Through it all, Mahr still kept an eye on her little brother, now known as Jod. It was the only way he could stay alive and Mahr knew that if any harm came to him, it would be her fault. This responsibility was always on her mind, right next to how they were going to escape. Every day they learned a little more on how they could leave. Mahr felt that the combat lessons were one of the most important. After all, how else were they going to get past the various alien species? They just needed the chance, an opening of some kind to exploit. But security was tight. They were escorted everywhere, and every class had a teacher. The children were only ever alone when they were either in their barracks, eating, or showering.

That didn't give them a lot of maneuvering room for escape, but they had to try and soon. Mahr feared that if they didn't leave soon they wouldn't want to. She was starting to forget her parents, her old life. She was starting to enjoy the combat lessons, her progress in learning the language, heck; she even liked learning about the Great Journey. But if this continued they would never want to leave.

The time was close though. The small band of friends had, by pure chance, found out where the docking bay was. They were on route to their lessons when they were stopped by a Sangheili who had a band of Unggoy with him. Mahr could see why the Sangheili were considered superior to these little, fidgety, dog-faced creatures. They had little-to-no discipline and could not seem to keep themselves calm at all. She caught only a couple of words that passed between the two Sangheili but still couldn't understand enough of it to tell what was going on.

The newcomer growled something in frustration. One of the escorts, Rakrs 'Sumar, growled back and waved his hand forward, telling the others to move on without him. Then Rakrs left with the new group down a small corridor. As the line moved forward Mahr caught a glance of a door opening to a large open space with a Phantom in a hanger. Mahr quickly marked the place in her mind.

Now all they needed was a way around the guards. Jon-la had already tested the doors of their barracks at the end of the day. Two blue armored Elites stood guard outside. Though Mahr and the rest had gotten better at fighting, they could still not take down the Elder, let alone two fully armed Sangheili in their prime. They just needed an opening, anything to allow them to escape. That opening came after long time of training and preserverance.

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The Minister of Penance and the Special Operations Commander of the Covenant, Ckwi 'Taeamee, watched five children on screen break away from the rest to gather conspiratorially around one bed, unaware of their being watched and heard.

"Do you think we should let this little escape plan continue Commander?" "Why should we not? Let us see what they can do." "What if they manage to get away Commander?" "Then it would be poor planning on our part Minister. If we underestimate them so badly then maybe they deserve to get away." "Well it does not matter if they did. They have nowhere to return to. However, I do not intend to let them get that far." "What is it that you plan Legate?" "Let us help them to a degree. Let us test them to see how far they've come. I leave the

arrangements to you Commander. After all, these may very well be under your command if they survive."

"It shall be as you say Minister."

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The day started normally with one exception. The eighty remaining children were out of bed and lined up to leave just as the door was opening, but their normal escorts were not there. In their place stood four Kig-Yar and six Unggoy. The children paused. During the whole time they'd been here they had learned that these species were lower than Sangheili. They were being trained as Sangheili and as such, they were higher in rank than these, their new escorts. Eyes narrowed, disdain or disgust crossing many of the children's faces. "Where are our escorts," Rktas demanded haughtily. "Gone to more important things fool! Now move," snarled a Kig-Yar, indicating the way with his gun.

The children came along with reluctance. Why the sudden change? Was something wrong? Where this worried some, it had the opposite effect on Mahr. This could be the chance to escape they were looking for! But she had to know how long it would last. If it was for only a couple more days, then they would have to move fast.

She felt a stinging pain as Jods clumsy swing of his practice pike actually connected with her shoulder. She shook away her thoughts irritably and brought her attention back to class. "Oh! Sorry Mare-Mahr! I didn't think I would actually hit you!" "Why's that Jod," Mahr asked, truly puzzled. "Normally you and everyone else have me down by now." "Well, that's your own fault. Sorry, but you should be able to get some of this by now Jod."

"I know. I'm just not strong like you and Mar-, I mean Rktas." "You need to watch that Jod. Remember what happened the last time Elder 'Emsree caught someone saying their old name," asked Mahr sternly. Jod nodded, shuddering. The boy in question had been made into the next day's shooting practice. The boys' friend was made to finish him off with a shot to the head.

"I don't want you to be the next one to die Jod. So get the new names straight or don't say anything." Jod nodded again, looking down. Mahr gave his shoulder a friendly pat. "Good hit though. Now go find someone else to practice with. I've got to ask 'Emsree a question." "W-w-what?!" "Don't worry about it. He won't kill me for this question." "Y-your sure?" "Positive. Now go practice. You need it."

Jod wandered off, dragging his pike awkwardly behind him. Mahr shook her head and sighed. He really needed to practice. She looked around for the Elder. He stood behind her, leaning against a wall, observing as usual. She walked steadily over to him, showing no emotion on her face. 'Emsree watched her approach, his own face blank and unreadable as ever. Mahr stopped a couple steps away from him and bowed respectfully, as she'd been taught to do.

"Elder, may I speak with you?" "What is it that you would ask of me Mahr? You rarely approach for anything else." If she didn't know any better, she would have thought that the old Sangheili was almost laughing. "Why have our escorts changed? Is something wrong?" "Nothing

is wrong, they are just needed elsewhere." "Oh. Do you know when they'll be back?" "They will return in a few days. It is nothing for you to be concerned about." "Yes sir."

"What is your concern is that mindless fool you keep protecting." "Sir?" Mahr felt apprehension clench her heart. "Do not let him drag you down. He would have died by now if not for you." Mahr blanched. She hadn't thought that anyone would really notice. "If you are going to be strong enough to survive the Conversion, you need to let him go." Mahr scowled at the Elder as he spoke. "I do not mean to be disrespectful sir but I will not abandon Jod," Mahr turned away to hide her expression but not fast enough. 'Emsree saw a look of guilt cross the girl's face. "He is my brother after all. I can't just let him die."

"That may be but you also need to think of your own survival. You are a female being seen with a weakling. Many, the Legate among them, do not believe that you should have been brought here as it is and you are proving them right. I have seen your potential and it is vast, yet you limit yourself and stop yourself from progressing because you wish to protect him. You pull your punches and allow him to land blows, when with any other male here you would have defeated him without mercy. If you do not stop, you will become weaker than the others and shall die alongside your brother," the Elder stated with finality.

"Very well. If they think I'm weak then I'll prove them all wrong and become stronger so that I can take care of the both of us," retorted Mahr, determined. She then turned and, bowing to the Elder once more, left to find a sparring partner, attacking her new opponent viciously. 'Emsree regarded the young female with the same sad but proud look that the older give to the younger, dream-filled generation. He knew that when this one's dreams shattered, it would be painful indeed. The class soon ended a little afterward. Mahr waited excitedly for the end of the day. When they finally made it back to the barracks she quickly grabbed her friends, impatience making her almost reckless. "What's the word," Hyrak whispered excitedly. "We're escaping in two days, so we need to get ready."

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"Commander Ckwi 'Taeamee, why call on me this day" asked Elder 'Emsree, standing in front of the Commander on the main deck. "I wish to hear from you personally what you think of the prospective Converted." "May I be so bold as to ask why?"

"The Conversion process is almost ready, thanks to our Lords, the Forerunners, creations and the Prophets." "So you wish to know of the ones who might survive." "Yes as well as to know how to test them." "Test them? In what way?" "By letting them carry out an escape plan that they have been forming." 'Emsrees eyes narrowed. "May I ask which of them are planning it?" "Yes, the two females, the yellow-haired ones brother, and two of their companions."

"I thought as much." Commander Ckwi 'Taeamee stared at the Elder curiously. "How so Elder?" "The yellow-haired female, Mahr, is protective of the weakest one, her brother, and would do anything to protect him. They were taken at the same time and she convinced Commander Vahn 'Thalanee to allow the boy to be sent with her. The

other two males were brought in with her as well and seem to have known one-another before they came here. They have been helping one another keep the brother safe ever since. It is the only reason the weak one has survived this long. "

"And the dark-haired female?" "Jon-la? She came in before the others. She is strong in her own way and has survived without help but has aided the weakling along with the others." "Do you think the females would survive the Conversion as they are now Elder?" "Possibly Jon-la but not Mahr, not if she continues to protect and favor Jod. She has the potential to be one of the best, the other Elders can attest to that, but because she focuses on the weakling, she has been hindered and will not become strong enough to survive."

"I see," a cruel look came into the Commanders eyes. "I will see to the solving of that Elder. We need all of the Converted that we can obtain, and if one of them is preventing the others from becoming worthy, then it must be removed." "I agree Commander." The two continued to speak about the others until there was nothing left to talk about. "I thank you for your information Elder 'Emsree. I shall certainly take the information you have given me into account." Ckwi 'Taeamee said, dismissing the old Elite. 'Emsree bowed and left Ckwi to his thoughts.

3. Chapter 3

Hello, sorry for the lack of commentary from last chapter. I hope you enjoy. :)

* * *

><p>Mahr crouched perfectly in place, trying to calm her breathing. This morning would be the day of their escape, their deliverance. Her heart pounded rapidly in her chest and her muscles tensed every time footsteps passed by. She knew that they would be coming to get them soon, or at least she hoped so. Her muscles were aching from sitting in the 'warriors crouch' that they had learned. It allowed her to rest and be ready to move at the same time but the problem was that it was made for Sangheili, not humans.</p>

Her mind wandered unbidden to her conflicted feelings. She felt almost sad to leave. In the last eight months or so this place had become a home to her. But she couldn't stay, no matter what she felt. She'd promised her brother that she would take care of him, that she'd protect him. She couldn't do that here. Mahr had reluctantly come to the same conclusion as everyone else, though it pained her to admit it. Jod was just too weak for this. She had saved him multiple times to the point where it was ridiculous. She had to get food for him, she had stopped him from speaking at the wrong time, she had to help him keep up in the line, and she'd even stopped the other boys from beating on him.

But what could she do? She still cared for her brother deeply. All of the extra effort was worth it when he spoke kindly to her, or gave that innocent smile. The only choice she had was to get him out of here, away from all of this. With her resolve strengthened, Mahr braced herself as the sound of a large group of approaching footsteps echoed down the hall, heading toward her.

Mahr nodded to Jon-la who was crouched across from her on the other side of the entryway. This had to be the guards. She gripped her makeshift rope made from a torn-up blanket tighter as the doors slid open. Two Grunts passed Jon-la and herself without even a glance. Then came the four Jackals two in the barracks, two waiting outside the doors, their backs turned. The two girls slipped out the doors and quickly started to choke the two door guards.

Mahr bit her lip and brought all her force to bear until the Kig-Yar stopped struggling as it gave a final sigh as it went limp. She barely stopped herself from retching as she went to grab the guards' needler. After all, this was one of the things they had been training for, to kill their enemies. She took a quick breath and looked over to Jon-la. She was waiting for Mahr, her own weapon, a plasma pistol, cocked and ready. They both quickly re-entered the barracks, drawing the surprised attention of the remaining escorts.

Before they could get a hold of their weapons Rktas and Hyrak ambushed the two remaining Jackals as the two girls shot the Unggoy, or tried to in Mahrs case. "Agony and flames Mahrs! You suck at shooting!" Rktas cursed, as a needle barely missed his face. "Sorry Rktas! I told you it should've been Hyrak doing this." After what felt an eternity, the escorts were finally dead. The other children stared at the small group of friends blankly, not sure what to do. Jod stumbled over the arm of a dead Kig-Yar as he came over to Mahr, earning a sneer from Rktas.

Mahr addressed the room of confused children "if you want to go home come with us." She turned away to face the exit. "Let's go home Dillan." Marian trotted over to peak out into the hallway, not caring one way or another if the others followed. Her friends crowded behind her, looking this way and that nervously. The hall was empty. "We need to hurry. Elder 'Emsree will start to wonder where we are" commented Ian. "I know, I know. I'm going" Marian snapped irritably.

She darted as quickly as she could to the corner were the hallway split, looking back at her friends and a couple of other kids as they followed, Dillan right behind her. She then turned the corner to bump right smack into an Elite, the first seen outside of class in the last three days. Marian's reflexes kicked in as she jumped back and started shooting. "Go guys!"

The children flooded around the Elite, forcing Marian to point her gun higher so as not to accidentally hit them. The Elite roared as his shields flashed, making the needlers' ammo harmless. Marian paused as the last of the children darted around the corner. The Sangheili made a grab for her but she ducked and ran around him, slipping slightly as she rounded the corner, just in time to catch a glimpse of a kid rounding another corner to the right, toward the docking bay.

She hurried to catch up to the group, her training coming to play in as she kept her breathing steady and her steps long. She sprinted as she came to the corridor that led to the docking bay and almost stopped as she spotted an Elite, blocking the path with his bulk. She ducked her head and, leading with her needler, fell to the floor, sliding right in-between the Elites legs, stumbling onto her feet as she skidded a little ways past the bays doors. She paused briefly as the sliding doors started to open, glancing back at the Sangheili in the hall. He stared back, not moving a muscle. Marian frowned at

this, unease suddenly descending on her. Something wasn't right. She quickly darted into the bay as she heard the doors open fully. She froze in place at the sight before her.

Five Sangheili stood in front of her, blocking her path to the airships. Behind them stood her friends and many of the other kids, all under the guard of their old escorts. Marian noticed the Commander who had captured her standing beside her group of friends, watching. She scowled defiantly toward Vahn 'Thalanee and charged the line desperately, with the thought that, however unlikely, if she took him down, somehow they could still escape. But it was doomed from the start

She shot what ammo she had left at the Elite in front of her she ducked once more under the legs of a tall Sangheili and charged screaming furiously at Commander 'Thalanee, swinging the empty needler like a club. Vahn easily kneed the girl in the stomach, making her drop her gun and gag from lack of breath. Marian felt a big hand grab her neck and haul her up. She scowled at the Commander and spat in his face. Vahn snarled and threw her into the group of huddled children. She righted herself and glared at Vahn once more. But before she could do anything more, the Commander moved aside for someone else.

An Elite in blue-gray armor came forward, bringing Dillan along with him, dragging the boy by the collar. Marian blanched and jerked toward them, instinctively reaching out. Ian and Iliana grabbed onto her, stopping her in her tracks. The new Sangheili lifted Dillan and held a blue energy sword to his neck before Marians' horrified eyes. "This is what happens to those who defy the Covenant," Commander Ckwi 'Taeamee stated coldly, his perfect English stinging Marians ears. He pulled his sword back to strike.

"STOP!" Marians scream made the Commander pause and glance at the young female with disdainful eyes. She strained against her friends hold to stand tall and proud in front the Sangheili. "None of this was his fault! I'm the one who started the whole thing. Kill me instead but let him live," Marian demanded. The new Sangheili lowered his sword but did not put it away as he turned his entire focus on the young female.

"Of course I know it was you, Mahr. I have been watching since the beginning. Surely you didn't think that this was all a coincidence? That you got this far because of your skill alone? No, you and yours were set up, so that we could see how far you have all come and for one other reason. To teach you a lesson. To teach you that only the strong survive and those that are not do not deserve to live. This boy's death is of your own making."

"How is that," snarled Marian, trying her best to cover her shock and desperation to no avail They really hadn't had any hope from the beginning. It had all been set up, doomed to fail. And it was all her fault. Commander 'Taeamee answered mercilessly as if he could read her thoughts. "Because it was you who started the idea of escaping, it was you who coddled this male so that when you were not by his side he faltered and was captured, and it was you who asked that he be brought into the same group as you, giving him a less than likely chance of surviving where he would have with another species."

'Whatever happens to that boy is because of your choice this day.' Marian's legs almost collapsed underneath her, her friends' hands now holding her up. This couldn't be happening, it just couldn't. The Elite put Dillan down on his feet. Both Marian and Dillan were so surprised that neither saw the sword coming. In one clean swipe, Commander 'Taeamee took Dillan's head clear off his shoulders and sent it flying across the room.

* * *

><p>Leave a review after the wort! ;p

4. Chapter 4

**Sorry that chapter was so short but this one's longer I promise.
Hope you patrons like the added gore. ^_**

* * *

><p>"Yet here you are." Han stopped, scowling at for the interruption. She wished to finish this part as fast as she could. Though it was a long time ago the memory still caused her pain. "Yes, I learned from that day and have survived to speak to you now. It makes no difference." "But it does. Why did you continue, after the death of one you loved, to serve the Covenant afterwards?" The squad of Converted shifted, tension filling the room. Obviously this was a rather touchy subject for them, observed. "Because it was shown that we had nowhere else to go Doctor. We had and have no choice but to serve"

_ "Even now? Could you not leave, even rejoin human society" asked Captain Osman. Mocking, vicious laughter ripped from Han's mouth, her mandibles stretching out in that tell-tale Sangheili way. "Human society! Surely you jest Captain! How could we return to a society that abandoned us to our fate, a people we do not know except as former enemies and barely new allies? No I think not Captain." "Truly Han, I believe that the Captain meant it in full sincerity. Why do you not join us" asked , watching the strange groups' reaction carefully. _

Hans face turned grave as she answered. "Because we are sworn to the service of the Arbiter. We were raised as Sangheili and as such we will bring honor to our bloodlines by giving our lives for his cause. Humans cannot understand this and as such we have no desire to try to join you. This is by our own choice and no others." "If this was by your own individual choices, how do those under your command feel about our offer?"

Han looked over to her team, her face neutral. One of the Spec-Ops stepped forward. "We will follow our Commander. If she will not join human society then neither shall we."The other Converted nodded in unanimous agreement. Han turned back to face the humans, her face full of pride. noted this as she spoke. "Very well then, please continue from where you left off."

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After Dillans execution, all the children except for Mahr were given a sound beating then sent limping back to the barracks, as Mahr was

left behind with the Commander. Mahr's three friends, thinking that they had lost two friends that day, did not say a word to each other as they tried to sleep, to no avail. When what constituted as morning on the ship arrived, all of the children were woken up at their usual time by their regular escort of Elites with four additional Huragoks. The children kept silent as the escapees were patched up and sent into line with the rest.

They were then sent to their regular lessons, with a few changes. Where the children once were left to their own devices, specifically when it came to eating, taking showers and sleeping, the Sangheili guards were there constantly, making the group of perpetrators wait until the others were done, leaving them little to no food or warm water. Throughout the day, none of the kids said a word to one another, the events of the previous day and the consequences that'd followed weighing heavily on their minds.

When they finally returned to the barracks, the kids were shocked to find the limp and slightly bloody, yet-clearly-still-alive, Mahr lying on her bed with two guards stationed nearby. These Sangheili went to join their fellows and were replaced by a different pair at the door. Before the children could break formation, Major 'Sughar addressed them, bringing their focus back from the disgraced girl. "As you can see, the merciful Prophets have allowed Mahr to continue to exist. However, she is not allowed to speak with any of you outside of training and those who wish to speak to her will be monitored closely. If it is even remotely suspected that she is conspiring to escape with any of you again, I can personally guarantee that the Prophets will not allow any of you to survive."

With the warning clearly delivered, Sughar and his Sangheili left the kids and their guards to themselves for the night. As the door closed behind them, the kids broke ranks, most darting to their beds while Hyrak, closely followed by the other two friends, went over to Mahr, carefully watched by the Sangheili left in the room. "Mahr, are you awake? Are you ok?" "Of course she's not ok Hyrak, look at her," hissed Rktas angrily.

Though the Elites had been careful not to break any bones, deep purple bruises and red welts decorated all of the visible skin on Mahr's arms, face and neck. Her face was so swollen in fact that when she would wake up, she wouldn't even be able open her left eye. The worst was the horrible burns in the shape of the flat side of energy swords on her back. Having burned straight through her suit and deep into her flesh, the stench of charred meat permeated the air around Mahr's bed. The burns were covered in fresh scabs and some blood and puss leaked through the cracks as even in her sleep Mahr struggled to breathe through the pain.

"Would you two chicos shut your traps and go away," growled Jon-la as she leaned over Mahr and as carefully as a twelve-year old could, propped the injured girl on her side, both of them groaning in pain. After all, Mahr wasn't the only one to have had gotten a beating. "What are you doing Jon-la," Hyrak gasped. "I'm changing her clothes," she replied simply. The two boys quickly went their way, not wanting to stick around to see what happened. Finding the hidden zipper-like mechanism hidden in the lining, Jon-la gingerly undid it and started to peel the charred and crusty top off.

Mahr hissed in pain as the tops edges ruptured some blisters and ripped off the top of some scabs that had formed on and around them. "Sorry girl," Jon-la whispered sympathetically as she grabbed a stray top that was lying nearby. Unsealing the back, she quickly stuck her injured friends' arms through the sleeves and attaching it to the bottom half leaving the back exposed. Then with a quick check over, Jon-la darted over to her own bed to get what sleep she could.

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For quite some time, the punishments continued for those who'd attempted escape, with many deaths as a result, including Mahrs closest friend Hyrak. Even when the majority of the restrictions were lifted, Mahr continued to not speak outside of their lessons. Guilt and sadness made her feel obligated to continue to punish herself, believing that all of those deaths that had happened during the punishments were because of her. It was the least Mahr could do to honor them.

But as time once again passed by, Mahr started to escape her guilt by throwing herself into the lessons. She became the top fighter in the combat class, both individually and as a team leader. She was one of the first to be able to speak Sangheili fluently and was able to write and read it as well. She was even allowed occasionally to study some of the Sacred Texts pertaining to the Great Journey. But it didn't erase the guilt that clenched her heart or stop the reoccurring memory of Dillan's and Ian's deaths late at night.

Her only shield was her goal. Become strong enough to prevent a needless death from happening to her remaining friends. If she could be the best, surely she could be put into the position of Commander, or Shipmaster. If she made it to that, Mahr would save her friends from all of this. Then they could make it to freedom. Then when the time came, they would all join the others on the Great Journey.

Two years passed by and the day before the Conversion came unbeknownst to the children. They were brought to the combat practice room like usual. Unlike the usual, there were many more Sangheili than before. Mahr recognized the armor instantly, though she'd never seen any of them in person. Councilors, quite a few of them, lined the back wall watching expectantly. Mahr almost froze at the sight of them, shock escaping her usual self-control. What in the world where they doing here?

Elder 'Emsree came forward, out of the crowd of silent Elites, to stand in the middle of the room and addressed the sixty children that remained from the original hundred. "This is the final day of your lives as humans. If you are found worthy, you will become part of the Covenant as one of the Converted. If not you shall be executed as the lowly human filth that you are. Now show us what you have learned. Prove your worth and skill and you will be rewarded, fail and die without honor."

The children were organized into groups, then individually. They fought as teams and individuals, the Councilors ever watching, observing. With the pressure to survive stronger than ever before, competition was fierce, resulting in four deaths for this lesson alone. The rest of the day continued much like that, as the children demonstrating their knowledge and abilities. By the end of it all,

the remaining fifty children were exhausted and, in Mahrs case, rather irritable.

"How annoying, what in the world was that for," whined Rktas, stretching out on his own bed. "Seriously? Didn't you listen at all to Elder 'Emsree? Honestly, even I thought you were smarter than that," snorted Jon-la. "Shut-up you two. I'm not in the mood to put up with either of you right now." The two friends went silent, eyeing her with caution. Though she now spoke outside classes, it was still a uncommon occurrence, unless she was in a foul mood in which case fist fights normally followed.

The ten deaths of their fellows had made Mahr feel edgy, not to mention having to prove herself to the Councilors. She knew by now that a normal Sangheili female did not join the military of the Covenant and if they did, it was normally not a place of high rank. This knowledge flashed through her mind and caused her anxiety to rise, making her even more irritable.

"Hey calm down Mahr. I'm sure your still one of the top five gifted kiddies of the group and the Elders still adore you," Jon-la said, half-reassuring, half-mocking. Mahr made a face in return and then gave a rare smile. Jon-la always knew what to say to make her feel better.

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"All is prepared for the Conversion of the Sangheili raised humans. We will begin with the Moram, Vadam, and Sraom bloodlines." "Your decisions are as wise as always Legate. The Councilors have also chosen which of the humans they wish to be added to their lineage." "Have they also chosen from their families who are to teach the survivors Commander 'Thalanee?"

"Yes Legate. It is here with the choice of lineages." The Commander handed over a data pad to the Minister of Penance. They were in a kind of observatory, overseeing the final touches to the metal catalysts that were essential to the Conversion process. Huragok floated among the multiple metal pods known as catalysts, making their strange musical whistles as they worked their four tentacles over their individual charges like they were made of glass. One turned and made a few gestures in a kind of sign language at the Legate.

"Let us begin. Commander," Vahn 'Thalanee snapped to attention. "-retrieve the whelps. Let us see who our Lords have chosen to serve us." The Commander bowed and left, taking two of his underlings with him.

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The children snapped quickly to attention as Commander Vahn 'Thalanee and two Spec-Ops Elites entered the barracks. "It is time for the Conversion," the Commander stated simply. Multiple emotions shot over the children's faces. Surprise, excitement, grim determination, and nervousness were all present. The Commander read out seven names, one of which was Mahrs. The six boys and one girl stepped forward. "Come with us."

They fell into line behind the three Sangheili and left, Mahr

glancing back. Jon-la smiled at her encouragingly before the doors slid shut. The small group were marched to an area that none of the humans had been to before. The room was long and with white lighting coming from what looked like an observation deck. In the room were strange sleek pods lined up neatly in multiple rows. They were a dull gray, with sharp pale blue lines of light flowing down their sides, each with a clear glass front, allowing the casual viewer a look at the smooth, hollow insides.

Floating Huragok, or Engineers, were moving easily between them, checking and tinkering as was their way. Two of these came up to the new arrivals and started to examine them, cooing to one another as they touched and stared. Mahr tried to discreetly dodge their tentacles, too anxious to put up with the poking and prodding.

After what seemed like forever, the Huragok moved away, one indicating that they should follow with a flick of its tentacle. The children went after them and the Sangheili left, heading over to the observation deck. Mahr felt herself trembling as the small group walked, her heart pounding in her ears. She watched as one by one the others in the group were led to their own individual pods with no particular order. Then it was her turn.

She waited as the Huragok activated her pod with some hidden mechanism, the clear door sliding upward. Feeling a little self-conscious and very nervous she stepped in and turned facing outward. As she turned, Mahr spotted the Minister of Penance and Commander 'Thalanee, among many others, watching from the observation deck. She squared her shoulders and lay back stiffly in the pod, getting the odd feeling of being inside an some kind of egg.

A sudden stabbing pain in her arms, legs, neck and temples, made her start. Multiple needles jabbed into her skin, injecting various different serums into her. She hissed in pain and then gritted her teeth as it went on, determined not to cry out. Mahr felt a pounding headache coming on and sudden nausea, two side effects of the serums. She started to feel sore all over like after a particularly strenuous exercise but it went deeper, her bones aching, burning. She started to gasp for air as the pain increased, her breathing became labored and her skin hot and feverish. Her headache increasing to the point where she almost cried out, feeling like her head would split open. Then the needles retracted, decreasing her pain by a bit. Then the door of her pod slid closed over her.

Some part of her had expected to be closed inside the pod but what came next was a complete surprise. A hissing noise vibrated through the pod, slightly distracting Mahr from her pain. Then her body stiffened in surprise once more as she quickly looked at her bare feet. Sludgy purple liquid started to ooze in, quickly covering her feet and continuing upward. Now she got a little scared as it rose up to her waist, then her chest, then shoulders. She started to try to break out of the pod futility, the purple sludge hardening where it touched metal. Then she was completely submerged. She held her breath and squirmed, unable to free herself. When she could hold her breath no longer she gasped desperately for air and got another surprise. She could breathe! One of the injections must have allowed her to be able to breathe in this thick liquid.

Mahr felt drowsiness start to creep up on her. She fought it as best as she could, tossing and turning, even flipping upside-down trying

to stay awake. After what felt like an eternity, Mahr heard a muffled sound and noticed a slight change in lighting. The door of the pod rose slowly, as it peeled itself off the freshly made cocoon. Mahr could barely make out the silhouettes of four dark bobbing blurs that suddenly blocked the little light that filtered through the purple shell and goo.

Two thin lines of shadow reached out toward either side of her. Mahr drew back from them, instinctively curling up into a ball. She felt a sudden jarring movement as her cocoon was being extracted from the pod as gently as possible. Or what she'd thought was a pod. What she hadn't been told was that the 'pod' was actually known as a Catalyst.

It had been created by the Forerunners, before they had come to truly know of the Flood. The Catalysts had been originally made to try to cross species in the hope that the strange new DNA that ran through the creations veins would be too unpleasant for the Flood to want to consume it. It had failed. When the Covenant had discovered it and made a few altercations of their own, the Prophets had the idea to use it on humans.

Mahr felt herself sway as the two vague Huragok forms cradling her placed the cocoon on the floor at the feet of a blurred form of an Elite and what looked like the Legate. Her mind went blank in a moment of panic, causing her to start to kick and punch at the walls of her strange prison.

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The Minister of Penance floated next to Commander 'Thalanee, honor guards at a respectful distance behind them and two Huragok floating on opposite sides of the Legate. The pair observed silently as the Engineers pulled the seven different cocoons out of their Catalysts. Occasionally they would stop as one of the Huragok would float up to one of the machines or cocoons and briefly exchange information with their fellows. They stopped at the end of the line where Mahrs cocoon was being extracted.

"It would seem Commander that there a few flaws still in the Conversion process." "Was it not expected to be Legate?" "Indeed, though I and the Hierarchs were hoping to have them taken care of by this point." "I understand." "Do you now? Look at Mahrs cocoon. Do you notice the flaw?" Vahn 'Thalanee stared at the purple oval, seeing the darker blurred form of the girl inside. As he stared, he noticed something. She was moving, punching and kicking at the cocoons thick walls. "How is that possible?! She should not be awake at all, not to mention being able to move like that," the Commander said, surprised.

"Exactly Commander. However we are in luck. The cocoons outer layer is thick enough that her natural strength is not enough to penetrate it." "If that is so, then what will happen when she has completed her Conversion? Will she be able to break out?" "If she is worthy, yes." "If not, then what?" "Then she will die. Those unworthy of our Lords gifts do not deserve to live."

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Mahr could feel herself slip in and out of consciousness. She had no

idea of time, only pain. Pains so unbearable that it would awaken her from her deep sleep and cause her to scream in silent agony then knock her out again. Some part deep inside her could tell that her body was changing, her bones reshaping, her muscles growing, her organs twisting. Little by little however, the pain started to fade and Mahr became more aware of her surroundings, came closer and closer to full consciousness.

After an unknown amount of time, Mahr awoke and just one thought entered her mind. She must get out. The fluids that had kept her alive had done their job. Now they would be her death if she did not escape. She punched out at the thick purple membrane. It bent to the shape of her fist but it did not break. She kicked, feeling something was not quite right with her legs. But she didn't give it any notice. She needed to get out.

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A month had passed and the time for the final and most difficult part of the Conversion was starting. The Minister of Penance watched from the Observation Deck with Commander 'Thalanee. They saw some of the cocoons start to move, some rocking, others having weird lumps and shapes of newly formed fists and feet showing through the thick outer membranes. A couple of them were not moving at all.

"And so it begins. Get your men lined up Commander."

The Commander watched in amazement as the newly converted emerged. Each was unique and yet they all had a large part of the Sangheili in them. He focused on Mahrs. The cocoon was rocking violently, impressions of fists pressing more and more violently against the membrane, verging on the point of desperation. Then finally a fist broke through. Purple goo oozed out of the newly made hole. Rivulets of purple ran down from the two hands that gripped the sides of the hole. With tremendous force the new Converted ripped the rest of the cocoon in half, purple sludge flooding all over the floor.

The female went to her hands and knees and wretched, vomit mixing with the once life-giving fluids that covered the floor. Vahn noticed that her jaws split in that tell-tale Sangheili way as she coughed. She got unsteadily to her feet and staggered. Her upper and lower legs had shortened and tarsal's elongated, with the distal and intermediate phalanges to support her weight when she walked. She stood two feet taller than she had before and her skin had gained a darker tone and some scaling. Mahr gauged her surroundings wearily, gasping heavily as she leaned against the open Catalyst, her body getting use to breathing in pure oxygen once more. The cocoon next to what remained of hers lay unopened, the body still inside. The one on the other side of the still born could not stand, one leg being shorter than the other. A Spec-Ops Elite stepped forward and stabbed the lamed one where it lay.

Out of the seven that had been put in the Catalysts only three survived the Conversion. The Legate gave a congratulatory speech that he kept mercifully short. Then the remaining three were guided to their own individual rooms to clean up, change, and recuperate. After a nice cool shower, Mahr instantly flopped onto her bed in exhaustion.

* * *

><p>Leave a review after the wort! ;p

5. Chapter 5

**And here is Chappy 5! **

* * *

><p> The Arbiter eyed Han as she paused for the humans. He knew that her extreme dislike for them caused her temper to rise and so far it had been kept in check but there was no telling how long that would last. She was rather volatile where humans were involved. He noticed her muscles tense instinctively as the Captain spoke.

_ "Where did the Covenant find these Catalysts?" "That is none of your concern Captain." The sneering emphasis on the woman's title told the whole room that Han had no respect or care for the Captain at all and that she would give nothing of use to her willingly. Dr. Halsey grinned as the Admirals scowl deepened as she replied._

_ "Not so Commander! It seems that the Catalysts could be very important to the UNSC. If this technology fell into the wrong hands it could mean disaster!" A cunning gleam came to Hans's eyes "Yes but to whom I wonder. The Sangheili who've rebelled will not use it. They have not the skill or knowledge of the Huragok. You however do. I have no faith in your kind Captain; therefore I will not give you the locations of the Catalysts or the intricate details of our Conversion." _

_ Osman's scowl turned to fury in a blink of an eye as she jumped up from her seat. The Arbiter noted how discreetly covered her mouth. She was trying not to laugh. He quickly brought his attention back to Han. Though she had not made any overt moves, Thel easily understood that she was getting ready to spring. After all, he was the one who'd trained her. He stepped forward, stopping the Captains oncoming tirade and Hans potential attack. _

_ "It was by my orders that those of the Converted were not to speak of it unless they were given express permission. The keeping of the remaining Catalysts were also left to them. Even I do not know where they are or if they still exist. Even so, I ask that you do not inquire into this any further." Osman took a quick calming breath and gave the Arbiter a false smile. His statement made it quite clear that the issue about the Catalysts was best dropped. She would leave it for now but it wasn't over, not by a long shot. _

_ "As you wish Arbiter, may we continue then?" The Arbiter nodded and returned to his original place though not without a warning glance toward Han. She bowed her head slightly in submission and continued from where she'd left off._

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Thel 'Vadamee disembarked from his transport, still puzzled and a little wary as to why he was here. A cryptic summons with little to no details from the Council was all he had to go on, something about training a special unknown person that was supposedly related to him

or some such. It had not been clear at all. His gold armor gleamed in the artificial lighting of the docking bay as he stepped out. He found the Legate waiting for him along with the Special Operations Commander of the Covenant, Ckwi 'Taeamee.

"It is good to see that you are prompt Commander 'Vadamee." "The summons said to be here without delay Legate. I came with all haste." "Of course, of course, I apologize for all the confusion and lack of information but this is a very tight operation. Few are privy to it as you will find out soon enough, to your benefit however." "It is my privilege to serve the Covenant." "Yes it is but if you perform well you will find yourself promoted, perhaps even to zealot." "I will fulfill whatever duty you give me Legate." "See that you do. Commander 'Taeamee, show Commander 'Vadamee to his charge." "As you wish Minister."

The Legate then left the two Elites to themselves. 'Taeamee inclined his head toward an exit and started to walk, Thels long strides easily bringing him to the other Sangheili's side. "So what were you actually able to discern from the message Commander 'Vadamee?" "Not much, if anything at all." "Indeed, it was more a way to bring you here than anything else. Your actual assignment is to train a Converted, an altered human who, by the blessing of the Forerunners and the will of the Hierarchs, has been changed into a Sangheili of sorts as well as other species in the Covenant."

Thel almost stopped in his tracks with shock. "Is this not heresy? How can a human be allowed into the Covenant?" "They are human no longer Commander. You will see when you meet your new charge. She is very much Sangheili, do not doubt." "A female as well?! Surely you jest Commander 'Taeamee!"

The two powerful Elites stopped in front of a door in the private quarter's area, a personal training room. Ckwi's grim silence told him otherwise as the Special Ops Commander turned to him. "Do not underestimate her because of her gender or her human past. You are to teach her as you would one of your own nephews to the best of your abilities. Am I clear?" "Yes Commander. What if she were to die in the process?" "Then she was not worthy of the gifts of that were bestowed upon her. The death would be well deserved. But do not take it as a license to kill her for just anything." "I understand Commander." "Good. Then I shall introduce you."

Standing closer than was normal to the side of the door, Commander Taeamee indicated that Thel should do likewise as he typed in the unlock code. As the door hissed open a blurred line of metal zipped through the gap, barely missing the Elites in the hallway and lodging ominously in the wall at the spot where Thel had been standing but a second ago. It was a pike, much like the ones the Honor Guards used. The two male Sangheili looked into the room where the projectile had come from.

A tall, lanky creature stood defiantly in the middle of the room, her arms crossed and her hip cocked at an angle that indicated she was well aware of her brashness and daring them to say anything about it. She was roughly around seven feet tall, with the familiar Sangheili legs and build showing through her body suit, tan skin tone, and dark scale-like bumps on her outer arms. Thel even noticed that she had the hinged jaws and mandibles and one slitted yellow eye. However he could also see the human there, though it was faint. The most telling

was the mane of yellow hair that was pulled back from her face in a rough ponytail. Then there was the blue eye with the rounded pupil, as well as the strange triangle that was all that was left of her human nose. And though she did have the mandibles, they were slimmer, less distinguishable than any true-blooded Elites. And somehow, all of these features allowed her face to show more expression than any Sangheili.

The defiant looking female scowled mockingly at the Special Ops Commander as he entered the training room, Mahr striding past him with an eerie kind of grace as she went to fetch her practice weapon. "Good throw Mahr," 'Taeamee said, almost teasingly. "Thank-you sir, though I was hoping for a more dramatic response," she replied good-naturedly, her Sangheili spoken with crisp perfection. In the past two weeks of recovery from the Conversion, she had found that she actually preferred the company of Sangheili, even becoming somewhat friendly with a few, including the Commander. Mahr yanked the pike out of the metal with ease, leaving a large gaping hole in the wall. She then ignored Thel as she reentered the room and faced the two Sangheili after she placed her weapon back in its rack with similar practice weapons of its kind. "I have no doubt that you would get a better reaction from one who doesn't already know you so well." "Hmm, if that were so, then your companion should have at least had a more violent response, but I guess startled will have to do for now."

Finally fully acknowledging his presence, Mahr looked over at Thel critically and then lowered her head in respect for his rank. "What is going on exactly Commander 'Taeamee," she asked, all serious. "This is Commander Thel 'Vadamee. He is the one chosen to train you further and complete your transition into the Covenant." At these words Mahrs eyes burned with a fierce inner fire. Thel saw now what Ckwi was warning him about. She would be determined to rise, above her past life, gender, looks, to as far as she wished and none would stand in her way. "When do we start?"

Ckwi looked to Thel. He quickly made up his mind to make this female an asset to the Covenant and the Sangheili and he would be the one to show her the path to honor and greatness. But first he had to see just how strong this ambitious adolescent female was. "We will begin now." Thel noticed Mahrs head jerk up to stare in surprise then look away as she caught his eye. "Then I shall leave you two to it." Commander 'Taeamee left the room the door sliding shut behind him. Thel and Mahr now stared at one-another, one openly studying the other, Thel neutral, Mahr skeptical. Then Mahr spoke up, with a slight challenge in her voice. "Well Commander? How shall we begin?"

"Grab two of those practice swords," the Commander replied. Mahr kept Thel in her sights as she grabbed two practice swords off the rack and tossed one to the Commander. Thel brought his sword up to a neutral position. Mahr did the same. The two circled each other slowly, Thel giving a deliberate opening. She charged instantly, swinging sharply toward his left. He quickly brought his sword up to deflect it, slamming his hilt into hers, making her completely defenseless. She quickly darted away from him, but not before he could give her a vicious smack on her rump with the flat of his practice sword. Mahr whirled sharply around to face him, eyeing the Commander with a little more respect, caution, and a touch of indignation. "You need to keep your swings quick and tight; otherwise

you will be handing over the advantage to your opponent. And never turn your back to the enemy. Again,"he commanded.

The two continued on for an interminable amount of time. Mahr would make a move and Thel would correct her mistakes through both words and stinging blows. In the end, even Thel was breathing hard when they stopped. Mahr was bent over gasping, her whole body smarting. She was used to sparring with human kids, old Sangheili and recently the occasional new recruit fresh from Sanghelios. Sparring with an Elite in his prime with some serious fights under his belt was a completely new, and rather unpleasant, experience. "You did well this day. We will continue tomorrow," Thel said simply, dismissing his new pupil. Mahr bowed her head in acknowledgement."As you command, Commander Vadamee," she gasped.

The next day was similar to the first, as was the next and the one after that and so on. He tested her skills with various weapons and helped her improve, though his methods were far from gentle. More than one session was cut short by Mahr being so beaten up that she either couldn't move or was knocked unconscious. On one occasion she even blacked out from pure exhaustion. However, slowly but surely, she was improving. During the times in-between the combat sessions, Thel also taught her the Vadam clans Saga in vivid detail, Mahrs future family if she could finish her training with also learned the deeper, inside details of Sangheili life that they'd barely scratched the surface of in her previous training. He would watch as she learned from the various family members' stories, her eyes filled with passion and excitement as he spoke. He noted how she developed an intense look of concentration when he told of life and social workings in a family keep. As the days turned to weeks then to months, Thel noted how her attitude changed, from a brash, wild, and undignified human, to a strong, controlled, honorable Sangheili, almost worthy of the name Vadam. Almost.

Mahr also continued to grow, stretching another half-foot in height in the first three months of her new training. With it came an unexpected result of both the growth spurt and the Conversion. Thel and Mahr were working on her hand-to-hand combat when it happened. This was one of the forms of combat where Mahr had managed to become almost level with Thel. She had gotten him to back up until he was almost against the wall, his arms up in partial defense, watching for an opening that she refused to give, raining down light, quick blows that he either blocked or dodged. Thel suddenly felt the wall against his back and Mahr twisted quickly to deliver a powerful side kick. Thel barely turned in time, moving away as Mahrs foot crashed violently through the wall of the practice room.

Both of them paused, surprised. Mahr removed her foot gingerly from the hole, careful not to cut herself, her eyes wide with shock. She backed away to make room as for her teacher as Thel moved to examine the hole. Mahrs foot had gone clean through to the outside hallway. She squirmed as the silence dragged on, Thels countenance grim and thoughtful."Sir, this must sound foolish but is that kind of strength normal?"Thel turned to look at her and decided to answer truthfully. "No Mahr. That is not normal for almost any Sangheili. This unnatural strength is a gift of your Conversion." "What does that mean then Sir?"Mahrs voice was slightly worried but trusting, her confidence in him unwavering. "It means we will have to intensify your training and monitor your strength. You are not yet fully grown and as such your strength may continue to increase until your growth is complete."

>What he didn't tell her was that he would also inform the Legate of the incident later. Surely he would want to know of this new development in the Converted. The two continued for a little while longer but neither of them were quite sure how to continue. Mahr was hesitating and pulling her punches, Thel trying to find a way to help her not put too little or too much strength into her hits and kicks.<p>

"It sounds like the final trial for our Converted is needed a little earlier than expected," the Minister of Penance stated thoughtfully. Thel stood before him respectfully, having just given his report of Mahrs progress and surprising strength."Do you believe she is ready for that Legate? She still has much to learn.""If she is to continue and serve in the Covenant we must know where her loyalties lay, one final test. She will join your team as a regular solider. We have just discovered a new world the humans have populated. Her differences will go unnoticed by the humans as we exterminate them." "When shall we depart Legate?" "You and a contingency of Sangheili with two attachments of twenty Unggoy and thirty Kig-Yar will leave in two days to assist in the destruction of the heretics."

>Thel bowed with that sinuous way the Sangheili had. This was familiar ground for him. He was used to having soldiers under his command, not teaching as if he were an Elder. "We will glory in the deaths of the blasphemers and reign justice upon them." "Very good. Now leave and give no mercy. "It will be as you command."<p>

The next day Thel entered the training room to find Mahr spinning a pike about her in a warm up exercise, her focus completely on controlling her movements, so much so that at first she didn't notice his entrance. He waited for her to notice him, watching her form critically. Mahr stopped in mid swing when she finally spotted him from the corner of her eye and turned to greet him. "You are overreaching when you stab forward. Adjust your footing to compensate," the Commander stated."I shall do as you say Thel. You have not led me wrong yet," she replied cheerfully, her eyes sparkling with energy. Mahr went to the weapons racks to trade her pike for a practice energy sword when Thel stopped her. "We will not be doing training this day Mahr. You need the time to prepare."

Mahr quickly replaced the weapon and straightened up, tension tightening her rippling muscles. "What am I to prepare for Commander?" "The Legate has decreed that you are ready for combat. You are to come with me and my team to assist in the purging of a new planet that the heretics have come to inhabit." Silence ensued, Mahrs head bowing in thought, her face grim. Thel watched intently, looking for any sign of hesitation, of descent. However it seemed he had no need to worry yet. When Mahr faced him again, he saw the burning inner fires of her determination through her eyes as she replied fiercely - "I am honored that I shall take part in the glorious work of the Covenant. I look forward to testing the strength of my arm against the weak blasphemers."

"May your sword strike true my niece that you may bring honor to the Vadom," Thel intoned the old Sangheili blessing, though it normally reserved for the nephews of the uncles who'd trained fell to one knee in yet another, lower, bow, too overcome with emotion to speak. She knew the implications of the blessing. It was also the only time Thel had ever called her niece. In traditional Sangheili fashion, the

young were raised communally until they were old enough to be paired off with a distant relation. Most commonly they were sent to a uncle on their mothers side to be trained and perfected, never knowing their father. To Mahr, who couldn't even remember her human parents, Thel was the closest thing she had ever had to a father. To be fully acknowledged by him as his niece filled her with a joy beyond description.

"Your room should have your new armor inside, as well as Huragok to assist you with its adjustments. Become familiar with it as quickly as possible, since we shall be leaving tomorrow as soon as all is ready," Thel instructed. Mahr rose to her feet and bowed her head again in acknowledgment. "It should not be too hard to come to grips with it my uncle. I have been trained well." "Then go and prepare yourself."

* * *

><p>Yeah, yeah, not very actiony, get over it. That comes in the next chapter. Wort, wort, wort. Xp

6. Chapter 6

Thel stood near the back of the Phantom as the ship bumped and dived as they came in for a landing. The anticipation was palpable as three of the new blue-armored Sangheili, Mahr among them, shifted and muttered restlessly, eager for some action. The red-armored veterans and Thel himself were steady and calm, having seen enough fights to not show their own anticipation. They were almost to their destination when Thel addressed his troops.

"The destruction of these disgusting worms is the will of the gods and we are their instruments. Fight to bring honor to your bloodlines, let their own bathe the ground and pay for their blasphemous ways! Death to the heretics!"

The Elites roared in answer, Mahr included, righteous fury fueling her own cry. The Phantom steadied and leveled out and the troops gathered closer to one another, the Unggoy careful to stay out of the way of the Sangheili not wishing to catch the attention of one of the more edgy youngsters. The back door dropped open slowly and Mahr felt her heart beat pound violently in her ears, almost blocking out the sound of gunfire.

War cries were shouted out as the large force of Covenant charged out of the Phantom. Mahr brought her sword out, quickly taking in the situation as Commander Thel 'Vadamee started to give orders. Some of the initial Sangheili had quickly set up a perimeter and were shooting at the humans who had barricaded themselves in and around some small, squat buildings that were clustered together. Mahr felt a shock of memory almost stop her in her tracks. She had once lived in such buildings, no not buildings, houses.

"Ruhr, Jamd, gather your contingencies and go around their flanks to see if you can take them unawares. Chase the nishum out of their filthy hovels. My troops and I shall take care of the scum as they come out in the open." "Ha, it will be like hunting the _engri_ back home." "Heh, more likely than not. Now head out."

Mahr, four Sangheili, five Kig-Yar, and ten Unggoy followed Jamd quietly behind the houses. They spread out quickly, prepping grenades as they went. She stopped at the side of a window and peered inside. There were humans but their backs were turned, facing out toward the Commanders forces. She waited until the other Covenant where in position at the back of the three houses. Jamd signaled for them to begin. She and another rookie elite broke the window they stood on either side of and threw a plasma grenade each. She quickly turned her face away as the grenades blew, blue smoke, glass, and screams coming out the window.

Before the smoke could fully clear Mahr quickly leapt into the window her sword at the ready. She saw a silhouette coming around the corner, too short to be a Sangheili. All of her combat training kicked in. Without thinking about it she jumped forward, swinging her sword in a controlled arc. The human child before her gurgled pathetically as he slid to the ground, the diagonal cut from the sword having almost cut him into two pieces from the left shoulder to his right hip.

She felt a numbness creep over her but she had no time to think. Mahr turned at the sound of the shrill yells and screams of the humans in the other room, the stuttering sound of human guns stinging her ears. She ducked behind the wall and traded her sword for a plasma rifle that'd been holstered at her hip. The other rookie who had thrown the other grenade joined her, drawing his own gun. The two Covenant warriors waited then quickly charged forward as there came a pause in gunfire. "For the Covenant!" "Die you blasted infidels!"

Leading with their guns, the two of them shot almost blindly at the three humans before them. It was easy, too easy. As the energy died down Mahr observed the bodies sprawled before them. An adult male's body lay in a pool of its own blood. Not far away were the remains of what might have been the man's wife and child. The child looked like it could have been about her own age if she'd still been human.

"These humans are truly worthy of extermination. They are weak and barbaric."

The rookie, Bahk, commented derisively as he kicked the male humans' corpse in disgust. Mahr felt a slight twinge of irritation but quickly repressed it.

"Come, we need to make sure that no more of them are slinking about," she commented, leaving the room as discreetly as she could.

She did not want to seem as if this was affecting her but it was. She knew she was not human anymore but seeing people for the first time in four years her memories came back to her in painful waves, faint though they may be. It troubled her. When they were sure there were no more humans remaining in the house they left. By the time they came out the other areas had been cleared as well. There were not very many casualties though that had been expected. The various squads were sent on patrol in ever widening circles until they met again. All the while Mahr wrestled with her conflicting emotions as she saw the bodies of the humans sprawled about her.

Thel watched Mahr unobtrusively. He could see her inner turmoil, though if he hadn't known her before now he would not have noticed at

all. The far off look she had as she patrolled with her fellows gave it away. It was rare for her to not focus on the task at hand. He had to make sure of her loyalties. Whatever doubts or misgivings plagued her had to be taken care of now or it would mean her death for sure. Thel gestured two of his Sangheili to prepare what he had planned for Mahr. They nodded and left as the Commander went to retrieve Mahr.

"Mahr come with me."

"What is it Commander?"

"We have captured a human Doctor who seems to have some knowledge of Forerunner technology on this planet."

"That is good! Has he said where it is?"

"No, that is where you come in."

Mahr didn't question him as she followed, apprehension and dread knotting her stomach. What would they need her for exactly? The two warriors walked over to one of the buildings they'd emptied of humans. Before she could enter, Thel stopped and turned to face her, barring her entrance.

"Know this now Mahr. Do not hesitate in the task ahead of you. It is the Prophets will. If there is even the slightest hint of mercy or you refuse to do your duty, there shall be grave consequences." Mahr nodded an affirmative but felt all the more nervous.

What exactly was so important that the Commander had to warn her ahead of time? Did he doubt her loyalties? Mahr mentally shook the idea out of her head. She was Sangheili, part of the Covenant. Why in the name of the Holy Ones would she hesitate in her duty? The whole situation made her uneasy.

The pair entered the decimated building. Two Elites were waiting for them in what had once been the living room. They held a human between them, easily stretching his arms out to full length. He wore a once-white lab coat, torn and stained with the dirt he'd been pulled out of. He looked like he was in the middle of his life, the corners of his pale brown eyes showing slight signs of age as well as the patches of gray in his side burns. Then Mahr felt her heart freeze. Despite his apparent age and the different color of his eyes, this man reminded her vividly of Dillan.

His wide-eyed look of terror, the haircut, his flabby face, and the freckles, this man could have been Dillans' father or uncle. She shook her head to clear her thoughts, annoyance helping her brush the memories and shock aside. She had a job that needed her attention, though what that was she didn't know yet. As Thel and she approached the odd trio, Mahr started to get a sinking feeling in her stomach. Something told her that whatever was going to happen next, it wasn't going to be good.

"Has he revealed anything relevant as of yet?"

"No Commander. We thought it wise to wait for your permission before we went any further."

As Mahr got a closer look at the prisoner, she noticed why the Sangheili were holding the man by the arms. What remained of the Doctors pant legs was coated thickly in red blood. She could see long, deep gashes in his calves, and a shard of bone sticking out below one of his knees. Mahr noted that some of the cuts were cauterized with the familiar sign of a energy sword. Her stomach clenched instinctively, disgusted. Why did this man not kill himself before he'd been so dishonored? To be captured and tortured by the enemy with no chance of escape except death.

She shuddered at the idea.

"Mahr,"

She quickly looked to Thel, bracing herself.

"Draw your sword and see what you can do to make this scum answer me."

"Yes Sir."

Her jaws clenched shut as she drew her sword. She walked slowly up to the Doctor, his whimpers echoing in her ears. How pathetic and yet. . . Thel started to speak in rough English, bringing her attention back to the present.

"Where is the site human?"

"What site? I have no idea what you're talking about!"

Thel nodded to Mahr. She lightly pressed the flat side of her sword against his broken leg. The man's' tortured scream ripped through her, the smell of burning flesh permeating the air. She grasped the swords handle tighter as she pulled it away at Thels bidding, determined not to show her anxiety as the memories of her own past punishment at the end of the same weapon came unbidden to the forefront of her mind.

"The sacred technology filth, the one you unholy kind desecrated."

"I'm telling you guys I don't of any sacred technology, or whatever it is."

Mahr pressed her sword against the Doctors back, burning through his shirt and into his flesh. This continued for a while longer Thel asking questions and the Doctor not giving any information, then Mahr torturing him, the cries of agony rubbing her nerves raw. Finally they stopped the Doctors voice and strength completely gone. His body was covered in blisters, third-degree burns, and more broken bones and gashes covered his entire body.

With every new torture, it felt to Mahr that what remained of her humanity was being cut out of her bit by painful bit. Humans were so weak, what was there to miss? They bled without resisting, they had no honor. Surely she should have no regrets. There was nothing for her keep from her past. This was her new life, the life of a warrior, the life of a Sangheili. Mahr felt a cold numbness come over her as she looked down on the lowly male human gasping painfully before her, all sense of compassion or mercy gone.

"It seems this weak little fool actually has nothing to give us. Finish him Mahr."

Mahr raised her sword to deliver the final blow to the man and, in her mind, to what was left of her past self. She stared into his horrified gaze without flinching as she brought the sword down on his neck, decapitating him in one easy blow. She would never allow her human heritage to move her again. This was her true conversion, her true rebirth, sealed with the shedding of the infidels blood.

Soon after that, the troops were called back to the carriers to be out of the way of the powerful beams that would soon turn the planet's surface to glass. Mahr did not join in the celebratory chatter as she solemnly came to fully grip with what she had become and the death of what humanity she'd known of that had existed in her. She quickly snapped out of her reverie however as Thel came to stand before her.

"When we return to the Penance, I have something that I wish to give you. Meet me in the training room," Thel stated simply, his tone more of a command than a request, passing her to join the other veterans in the front.

For the second time that day confusion clouded Mahrs mind, with an edge of panic close behind. Had she done something wrong? What could he give her? Why would he give her anything? She'd done nothing to stand apart from the others, nothing truly worth honoring. Questions plagued her as they continued on to the Penance, Mahr growing ever more nervous as they approached their destination. She disembarked from the Phantom and walked to the training room to wait for Thel.

She found him already there, waiting for her. There was a brief silence between them, Mahr watching Thel warily.

"You did well this mission my Niece. You fulfilled the will of the Prophets, regardless of the human heritage that is yours no longer."

Mahr stared at Thel in dumb silence, not knowing how to reply to the complement except to bow her head in gratefulness.

"From this day onward you will be known as Han Vadam for you have proven yourself a true Sangheili. Your name will be added to the recorded lineage of Vadam and you will be allowed all the rights and privileges of those who are of the Vadam keep. Let none doubt your claim of being Sangheili. The human that was in you is purged, your Conversion complete."

She fell to her knees and bowed her head near the ground.

"I am deeply honored my Uncle. I will do all within my power to bring honor to our bloodlines and destroy our foes."

"Then rise Han, daughter of the Vadam Clan."

Hah, how about that, I updated. :)*

7. Chapter 7

Silence fell as Han concluded with the story of how she came to be. She noted the dark looks the humans were giving her. She jutted her head up at a defiant angle, feeling the tension in the room.

_ "How old were you exactly when you killed those people, Commander Vadamai," asked. _

Han noted the strange, clinical voice change in Halseys voice. She didn't quite understand why it had changed, or why she would ask such a question.

_ "By Sangheili or Human years Doctor?"_

_ "Human if you please."_

Han paused and answered with a little hint of confusion in her voice.

_ "I would say about fourteen of your years. We actually are not quite sure as to how the Conversion has affected our ageing. Why do you ask this?"_

_ "Because if we know at least your first name and perhaps your age in human years, we may be able to trace where you and your comrades came from. Maybe even track down any surviving relatives." A dark silence filled the room as Han stiffened, her comrades looking to her for a response. _

_ "We have no human relatives," Han responded, her tone icy, brooking no arguments. Halsey studied the Converted for any sign of decent. None were given. Halsey decided it was time to press a little, see what she could learn._

_ "Very well then. So in summary by the age of fourteen years your moral sympathy and conscience that was given to you by your original race was seemingly completely eradicated, creating merciless, emotionally unstable, murderous children, am I correct?.."_

Han scowled angrily at the Doctor and almost snarled something when she paused and, after studying Halsey for a little while, bent her neck in a rueful smile, an understanding look crossing her face.

_ "You truly are one to be cautious of Dr. Halsey. Toying with others will get you into trouble one of these days."_

_ "Is that so?"_

Han chuckled, "Indeed, not everyone is as tolerant of word games as I am and I am not that tolerant by your kinds standards."

Catherine Halsey was intrigued. This hybrid, this "Converted", was sharper than she had given it credit for. Not many Sangheili had that kind of deep insight into a human word game, most taking almost everything at face value. Perhaps Han had not lost as much as her humanity as she would've wished.

_ "So I have observed Commander. What I would like to know is the part you and your fellow Converted played in the Human-Covenant war." _

_ "We played many parts Doctor. The main reason we were created was to be used as disposable weapons in that war, nothing more." _

_ Han replied, deep bitterness evident in her voice. Halsey noted this. _

_ "Tell me all of it." _

Time passed and Hans's skill and strength continued to grow as she advanced in rank. She fought and clawed her way up the chain of command, rank by rank until she gained a command position of her own, over her own kind.

Han walked at brisk but not undignified pace. She was on her way to meet up with the Legate for the assignment of her new team. It was all she could do not to show the excitement and tension she felt on her face. After the Conversion she had not seen one of her fellow Converted. Had her old friends survived? Would any of them be in her new team? Han stopped and took a deep breath to calm herself. She had not come this far to blunder now. She had to keep her emotions under control.

Taking deliberately slower, calm steps, she walked the last couple of feet to the docking bay. She found the Minister of Penance, his guard, and Commander 'Taeamee waiting for her, with two red and two blue armored Sangheili she did not recognize standing a little ways off. Han felt her heart pound in her chest and her feet stop. Though she could not see their faces, she knew without having to be told that these were her fellows, her people. What it was that made them stand out one could not exactly say without further inspection but there was an air about them that separated them from the others of the Covenant.

"Commander 'Vadamee come forward." The Prophet gestured for Han to join them.

She walked slowly over, mindful of the Honor Guard nearby. She did not want to do anything that would resemble a threatening move as she came to bow before the Legate. There was a brief silence as the Legate observed her with a scrutinizing gaze.

"Rise Commander and rejoice. Soon you and your new team shall help pave the way of the Great Journey."

"I am humbled by this honor. Direct thy weapon as thou wouldest see fit," Han replied humbly as she came to her feet, her head lowered in submission.

"The Penance will be joining the Fleet of Valiant Prudence that is going to a planet that has been infested by the humans. This is a great success, seeing as the filthy wretches have started to become more careful of their locations."

"Locations Legate?"

"The heretics have spread further than we had initially anticipated

but the Gods have been generous with their favors. We have even found the name of their home world, though not the location."

"What is the name of it Legate?"

"Earth, or some such thing. Disgusting blasphemous filth! Only the righteous are allowed in the naming of planets. Rejoice in your strength and your forgiveness that has been bestowed upon you as you bring their final judgment upon them!"

"We shall become the hands of our mighty Lords and strike down the heretics to continue on in your service and that of the Holy Ones."

"I have come to expect nothing less of you Commander 'Vadamee. Do not disappoint me."

Han bowed in silent acknowledgement of the praise and warning. This kind of conversation was normal between her and the Legate, formal with an undercurrent of danger. Han new that if anything she did gave the Minister of Penance the slightest idea that she still retained any humanity, she and whoever were associated with her, would be put to a dishonorable death without any hesitation. Han had quickly come to realize her full situation as she'd advanced in rank. She was a weapon, not truly one of the Covenant just a tool for it. A weapon that failed was no good and would be disposed of. She came to fear that day, praying always to the Gods that she may not live to see it.

"Commander 'Taeamee will introduced your team the Prophet of Regret has picked for you."

"Once more I am honored by the High Prophets notice."

"As well you should, but such honor can be like your sword Commander. Beware where it falls."

The Minister of Penance finished warningly, turning his gravity throne full circle and departing, his guards not far behind. Han suppressed the intense urge to sigh. She knew the danger in attracting the High Ones notice. She did not need to be reminded as if she were still a kit. Han shook off her annoyance and rested her gaze on Ckwi, allowing her happiness at the new command to fill her gaze and color her tone as she spoke.

"It has been a long time since I have seen you last Commander 'Taeamee."

"Likewise Han, though I suspect I should call you by your title now."

"You are of higher rank than I Commander. How you choose to call me is of your own affair," she replied deferentially.

"That may be for now but from what I have heard, you are well on your way to becoming part of the Special Operations sector and higher."

"I would be very pleased by such news but only once I am in such a position."

Ckwi chuckled "No doubt. Your ambition seems to have no bounds, Commander 'Vadamee."

"Were you not the one to teach me not to allow myself to be limited by weakness? I shall add my strength to my bloodline and bring honor to my keep, no matter the cost to myself."

"So it would seem. It is an honor to the teacher to see the student go farther than was expected of them."

"I am happy that I can bring you joy in your old age Teacher," Han replied teasingly.

"I am no Elder yet Han. As long as we reach for the Great Journey I shall fight on."

"As will I Commander. Now if you do not mind, I would like to be introduced to my Converted."

"Very well then Commander, I believe you once knew Major Nagu 'Anausee under the name Jon-la."

Jon-la or Nagu now, stepped forward and removed her helmet, giving Han a respectful inclination of the head. Nagu's Conversion seemed to have gone over well. Short black hair with deep red tips hovered over her red armor. Her eyes were completely Sangheili, her skin dark like a male's with the scale-like bumps on the skin that Han could see. Unlike Han however, Nagu had a remnant of their old human hands, a small stub of joint that had once been a thumb on both hands.

"It does my heart well that you have survived the Conversion Commander Vadamee."

"Same to you as well Major 'Anausee," Han replied formally, nodding to her in return. She did not dare show the joy that she felt. Nagu replaced her helmet back on her head and stepped away as the other Major stepped forward.

"This is Major Erhar 'Elaodee. He has been proven many times in battle."

"It is an honor to meet such a high ranking Converted Commander. I look forward to serving with you," Erhar stated eloquently as he removed his helmet and bowed his head in respect.

When he straightened up his face surprised Han. Unlike herself or Nagu, Erhar had a very human face, so much so that it took awhile Han to nod back, not daring to say anything to him quiet yet. Erhar did not have the serpentine neck and permanent hunch that were characteristic of Sangheili neither was his head elongated to accommodate the classic four mandibles as Hans was. In fact only his bottom jaw split open, seemingly the only jaw change that had been brought on by the Conversion. Even most of his nose remained had remained intact, though it was a little flat. The two things that showed the most change in the Majors face was the slitted eyes, which were both a bright gold, and lack of hair, showing the same skin texture as the two female Converted also there was no remnant of human ears left.

Major Elaodee stepped back into line as one of the blue Minors stepped forward.

"This is another you may have been familiar with. Ussh 'Ramatee, formally known as Rktas. He is better at stealth than fighting upfront," stated Ckwi 'Taeamee with a slight tone of disapproval.

Hans' old friend did not remove his helmet and ducked his head in only the barest of acknowledgments. Her faint memories of him reminded her that even before the Conversion, he had rarely spoken except to criticize or mock. She bared her throat to him challengingly as he met her eyes when he straightened.

"Do you have nothing to say to me, old friend," Han asked, daring him to return her challenge.

Ussh lowered his eyes and head once more, lower than before "No Commander 'Vadamee. I am at a loss for words."

The words and tone was respectful with only a hint of sarcasm. She could live with that for now. She nodded back to him in the slightest of gestures. He returned to his spot with the other three without turning his back on her. Finally the last stepped forward.

"And this is Ngbe 'Jjasee, an aspiring fighter. He will do well with your team."

"I am honored to meet you Commander 'Vadamee."

He removed his own helmet and smiled at her pleasantly. His hair was a Mohawk of black hair, short and thick. His face was more like Hans with a bare remnant of a nose, four mandibles, and the skin texture of a Sangheili. His eyes were narrower than any of the others and unlike any Sangheili his eyes were a deep brown, almost black and slitted. Han nodded to him and gave a quick smile back as he returned to his place in line.

"I am pleased with the Prophets choice in my team," Han said to Commander 'Taeamee.

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Hans' anxiety was so great that she didn't even bother to stop herself from pacing. This was her first time leading soldiers into combat. What if she could not protect them? Everything until now had been to place her in a position to care for her kind. What if she failed? The floor of the Penance vibrated beneath her feet, on its way to their target, with Han pacing the floor of the training room, not knowing how else for her to use her pent up worry.

"Why so nervous Commander? Surely you are not afraid."

She whirled to face Erhar 'Elaodee who was leaning against the door frame. Even though she had a few days to get to know her team, she still could not quite get use to him. His mostly human face made herself and most of the other Converted feel unsettled, causing Han to become irritated with herself. She should be able to handle this but her emotions had a way of coming out, whether it was when she was giving orders or even when she was just having a conversation, her

discomfort and anger at herself came through. And now the one who was the root of the problem was here. She just could not catch a break.

"Fear is for the weak Erhar and I can tell you now, I am not weak."

Hans tone made it quite clear that his company was not wanted.

"Of course you are not. How could you be?"

Erhars own tone told her he was not about to back down. He causally straightened up and approached Han with that familiar eerie grace that had become a trademark of the Converted Elites as she tensed.

"You, who were the one to dare try to defy the Covenant and escape when we were kits, who has survived not only the Conversion but the Covenant and countless battles, becoming the Commander of some of the few remaining Sangheili Converted, no, you are not weak Commander, not on the outside at least."

"What do you mean," Han asked, her eyes narrowed dangerously.

"Mean Commander? Why I mean to ask what drives a female so far? What are you covering up I wonder. Are you still the naive afraid little human or have you lost your soul to the pride and blood-thirst that govern the Sangheili?"

Males, Han thought angrily. She was almost chest to chest to him now and she was past annoyed, she was mad. What right did any male have to doubt her, to test her, after all she'd been through! It was the same every time she was reassigned, all because she was a different gender. The fact that she just realized he was much taller then her as he looked down on her pushed Han over the edge.

"What drives me so far Major is the arrogant males under my command who seem to think they can do and say anything they please just because I am female!"

She kicked him in the chest, away from her and into the wall a few feet back. She braced herself for a fight as he staggered forward, righting himself, his hand placed gingerly over his now bruised rib cage. Then he surprised her again by laughing happily.

"That is a good enough reason for me Commander. I will leave you to yourself but please know this," Erhar started to head to the entrance as he glanced back at her.

"I have nothing but the utmost respect for you. I just wished to know who exactly I am to be serving under. Do not disappoint me."

He strode out as easily as he came in, leaving Han even more anxious and pissed off than before. Was he just playing with her or was he being honest? Was he testing her? She shook her head angrily to clear her head.

"Agony and blood I hate males at times," Han snarled under her breath as she continued her pacing.

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For the second time that day Han was cursing under her breath. Her team and herself were pinned behind some twisted remains of concrete and support beams, being shot at from the front, by some new, strange humans. Their armor was different, their faces covered by golden visors and they were about the same height as a average Elite. They were stronger than the others Han had face before.

She took a quick glance around a pitted concrete beam at the pause in gunfire but was forced back into place by grenade explosion. She growled angrily. They had to get those generators. She took a deep breath and closed her eyes, focusing on what little she'd been able to see. One had barley turned his back on her just a few feet away from her, presumably to reload. This new human soldier was behind his own barrier and though she only got a brief glimpse, she knew from the directions of the cover shots that at least two others were with it, one on either side.

Her eyes snapped open. Now she knew what to do.

"Major 'Anausee!" Nagu turned from her own shooting to face Han.

"Take half of what is left of the Unggoy, some Kig-Yar, and Minor 'Ramatee and circle right. I will take the rest and 'Jjasee and circle left. They do not seem to have that many troops left and what is left we can take care of. Be stealthy, make your troops stop firing a few at a time and leave in small, staggered amounts so that it does not seem suspicious. Give 'Ramatee a lead as well, he is good at stealth, this should show exactly how good."

"A deception." A familiar cunning look came to Nagus' eyes.

" Exactly. Major 'Elaodee-" he too pulled his attention away from the fight to her.

"You and the two Lekgolo will distract them while we get into place. Use various weapons from different positions, as if there are still troops back here. I hear you're a fair shot, so make each count understand?" He grinned and nodded

"Good, now let's move."

Han and Nagu continued to fire, steadily indicating for the troops to move out to the sides a little at a time. The two females and their fellows quickly followed, their movement covered by Major 'Elaodee and the Lekgolos. Han kept a wary eye on the fire fight as she led her troops through, cautious yet eager for the kill. She signaled for a halt when they came close to their target, the Commander waiting to hear from Major Anausee. She didn't have to wait long.

"Commander, we are in position."

"Then proceed. Wort, wort, wort!"

Han made some of the Unggoy charge in first, bringing out what remained of the Marines who were ready for them. She then directed the Kig-Yar to be long range shooters and to form a blockade with the remaining Unggoy. Then she waited, adding support when it was needed,

watching always for the strange human warriors. Quickly growing impatient, Han turned to Ngbe 'Jjasee.

"Keep these filth busy. You should be able to finish them quick enough. I am going to scout out past these lines for those strange armored humans."

"As you wish Commander. Be wary though, there is more to them than we know."

"My thoughts exactly 'Jjasee. That is why I'm going to hunt them myself."

The two nodded and Han left, activating her camouflage once she got behind the lines. She stalked warily among the rubble, watching for any sign of movement. Unfortunately she was spotted first. An unexpected kick from the left made her almost lose her footing as well as lose her camo. She quickly turned to face her advisory and growled in anticipation. One of the strange humans crouched before her, a serrated blade in its hand. It stood almost equal height to her, covered in bulky green armor, its face completely hidden by its helmet and golden visor. Han activated her energy sword and moved into her own neutral position.

The two advisories circled one another, each wary of the other. Then the human took her by surprise when it charged, grabbing her middle and slamming the both of them to the ground, sending Hans sword flying. The human punched her in the gut a few times and as no other human could, cracked two of her ribs in the process. She snarled in pain and pushed it back by its helmet, her fingers cracking the visor and causing indents in the metal.

The human resisted her, trying to push back and bring its knife to bear. Han grabbed its wrist as the knife came close to her face. There was a pause as these two enemies struggled for supremacy, unaware of the chaos around them, one completely focused on the other.

They were almost equal in strength, but that slight difference was all Han needed to win. She summoned all her energy and snarled into the spider-webbed visor and rolled, getting a few punches in as she pinned the human down, keeping its knife arm away. The human finally head-butted her and she stumbled and fell on her back, pain making her vision blur. Panic shot through her as she spotted the blurred image of green armor staggering toward her. She instinctively kicked out and with extra strength born from desperation, her foot shot through the armored humans chest, strange red blood and clear liquids gushing out around her limb.

Han didn't know quite what to do from here. She could faintly hear the humans muffled gurgling as it died in agony and though her enemy was defeated, she wasn't sure how to get her foot out. The liquidized crystals in the humans insulated layer of the suit continued to leak out, causing the armor to cave in, making it even more difficult for her to remove her foot. She tried to wiggle it out but she could feel the ribs around her ankle and a little above it start to scrape and rip at her own armors under-layer. She was not about to add spilled blood to her already dishonorable injuries. Her patience at an end, Han exploded into violent explicative's as she started lashing out with her foot and the body that was still attached to it. Her bad

luck was complete when she noticed that her Converted watching her.

End
file.